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THE LAST

OF

THE PLANTAGENETS:

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE,

ILLUSTRATING

SOME OF THE PUBLIC EVENTS, AND DOMESTIC AND ECCLESIASTICAL MANNERS, OF THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES.

Alas! the Family 's
Extinguish'd in him, and the good old Name
Only to be remember'd on a tomb-stone!
A name that has gone down from sire to son
So many generations!

SOUTHEY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE LAST

OF

THE PLANTAGENETS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH OF A NOBLE SOLDIER.

——————Tell me,
How have you pass'd the time you wanted victuals!
——Very hardly.

DAVENPORT'S KING JOHN AND MATILDA.

The illustrious warriors who found themselves wasting by some lingering illness, were not always content barely to excuse their fate: they often availed themselves of the few moments that were yet remaining, to shake off life by a way more violent or glorious.—But if none of these reliefs were afforded, and especially when Christianity had banished these cruel practices, the heroes consoled themselves at least by putting on complete armour as soon as they found their end approaching; thus making, as it were, a solemn protest against the kind of death to which they were forced involuntarily to submit.

MALLET'S NORTHERN ANTIQUITIES.

WHEN that I had thus re-entered the cell, I saw none of the foes which my troubled fancy had looked for in that place, the Viscount being there alone, and seated on the very same spot whereon

26X870

I had last seen him; but although I looked anxiously round for the Hebrew, yet was Israel nowhere to be seen. The chamber was now full dark, saving the red flickering of a few dying firebrands near the Lord Lovel, which cast their light upon a face in which the decaying spark of life seemed as near its departure, and threw into most mournful shadow his ghastly looks, whereon distress, famine, and death, seemed to have wrought wild work since I had gazed on him before. His eyes had now lost all their martial brightness, and were glazed and dim, and there was that keen sharpness in his features and limbs which is the forerunner of the last hour; but though his voice was weak and hollow, and his utterance slow, yet was there now about him a holy calmness and piety, which seemed to show that he had learned better how to live or die within the past week, than in all the years of his life beside.

When I drew so near him as that he might well note that some one approached, he said, "Ha! who cometh there?—But it skills not now, for a dying man fears no earthly enemies; and blessed be God who hath given me again to behold the face of a fellow-creature! What! is it indeed thyself, my kind Plantagenet?"

His altered speech, his changed countenance, and his wasted form, had so riveted my looks upon him, that sorrow and wonder had partly enchained my tongue, and I could not on the instant make reply; but, at length somewhat recovering, I said,—"Ay, my good Lord, it is indeed your poor friend, Plantagenet; who, God be praised! findeth you still living and in safety; and hath

brought with him such healing medicines from the good Chirurgeon as shall work a speedy cure upon your fainting frame."

"Nay, good Richard," answered the Viscount, full sadly smiling and speaking in a low voice, "that may not be;—thy kind ministration cometh all too late, since I wot that physic is but for the quick, and I do already deem myself as one of the dead!"

I heard him with much sadness, though with little amaze after having beheld him, yet, being willing to support his hopes, I replied, "not so, my noble Lord, since I can well trust that there yet remain for you many years of life and honour."

"I pray God, Plantagenet," returned he, "that thine own hopes, whatever they be, may have better foundation and fulfilment, than they ever can which thy kindly spirit now breathes for one on whom the cold grasp of death is already laid, and whose last hour is close at hand."

"Oh! say not so, mine honoured Lord," replied I, bending over him and taking his thin wasted hand, whereon were hanging the clammy dews of death,—"say not so, since I have brought with me certain most potent and reviving cordials, compounded by your approved and faithful Chirurgeon, which shall full quickly bring you back unto life."

"Alas!" responded he, faintly, "the physician's skill cometh all too late; since I may now say with holy Job, '*spiritus meus attenuabitur, dies mihi breviabuntur, et solum mihi superest sepulchrum:* my breath is diminished, my days are

shortened, and the grave alone remaineth unto me. That aid, which, timely supplied, perchance might have restored my strength, will do but little for me now. Let the will of God be done!—yet have I thought, Plantagenet, that if thou hadst not left me, or if any of our Christain Faith had been near me, peradventure I had even at this time had hope of life: but as it is, abandoned by the Jew, and——"

"Holy Saints!" exclaimed I in terror and wonder, for now mine amazement had suddenly increased much more than before, "what mean you, my good Lord? hath Israel indeed deserted you, or done aught to call forth your anger?"

"That," replied the Viscount, "I may not truly aver, seeing that I am now at the point to die, and have long known him faithful; so that perchance I should rather lament for some calamity having befallen him through his fidelity unto me. Yet may I tell thee, good Richard, that since the night of thy departure hath he never returned hither!"

In very sooth, I could scarcely think that mine ears heard aright as the Lord Lovel thus spake, or when he continued, in such terms as moved both mine heart and eyes to pity him, to relate unto me how he had been left wholly without sustenance throughout five of the days which had passed away since I left him! I then hastened to take from my pouch some food which I provided at the hostel where I last stopped, and placing it before the Viscount entreated him to eat thereof; telling him that I would efstoons go forth for more and to inquire what I might touching Israel of

Castile. But unto this the Lord Lovel replied with a sad smile, declaring that he would no more taste of food on earth, having taken his last morsel as the blessed viaticum, which should prepare him for his departure from the flesh: he added, moreover, that he would not have me quit him again, for that he had much desired to see me ere his death, and he would fain speak unto me whilst utterance was left him.

He then related unto me, albeit with much difficulty of speech, how that, when his food was nigh spent, and after long waiting, he found that Israel returned not unto him with more at his wonted hour,—he began, in impatient mood, to lament that he had intrusted his life to the keeping of an infidel Jew: since he did well believe that he had wantonly left him to die. His infirmities had also much increased from his sickness, so that he might in nowise have gone forth himself; and, as his little store of provision lessened, he looked forward unto a lingering death, without human creature near him to aid him in his last hours. Deeming that he had now no hope of escape from such sad fate, he bethought him of addressing himself unto the holy duties proper unto that solemn time; thereupon taking up one of those tomes, which, as I have noted, lay scattered about the cell, thinking it to be some pious hours or offices, or other book of Christian prayers. But it was, in truth, a full and devout and ghostly *Treatise of the Imitation and Following of the blessed Life of our merciful Saviour Christ Jesus, and of the contemning of the World:* the which godly book was written first in Latin by that

most learned and Christian doctor, Johannes Gersenus, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of St. Stephen at Verceil, albeit it hath been falsely attributed unto other authors.* The Lord Lovel now remembered him that it had been done into English at his command, by Master Bernard de Chadlington, sometime his chaplain, and vicar of St. Kenelm's Church at Minster-Lovel; who was greatly enamoured of that divine treatise.

In the time of the Viscount's prosperity he little recked for aught of book-lore, since I wot that both his heart and his treasure were in camp and court; and therefore the pious tome of the Abbot Gersenus was cast aside for sword or charger, hawk or hound, or, in brief, for aught of worldly pastime or employment. But in the day of his adversity and hiding, long after the good chaplain had gone unto his rest, when his labours were all forgotten, lo! his little book came forth in wondrous wise to awaken the soul of him for whom it was first penned, even at the eleventh hour. As the Lord Lovel sate in that lonely cell, thinking upon death, and I ween well nigh spent

* It will doubtless be remembered that the very celebrated *Imitation of Christ*, has been assigned to Thomas à Kempis, John Gerson, Chancellor of Paris University, and the Abbot Gersen mentioned above; beside some other authors of far less probability. For several reasons, perhaps Gersen may be most safely regarded as the real writer of the treatise; but his claim being strenuously supported by the Benedictine monks, against the advocates of Kempis, who was of the Order of St. Augustine,—was probably the reason for the assertion in the text, Richard Plantagenet having been educated in the Benedictine monastery at Ely. The passage subsequently cited from the *Imitation of Christ* will be found in Book I. Chap. xxv.

with famine, he takes me up this holy treatise deeming it to be a missal; and, presently opening it, he lights upon these blessed words, which seemed to speak unto him with the voice of an angel.

"Oh! if we myght contynue in thys lyfe wythoute bodyly refecyon, as eatyng and drynkyng, sleepyng, or any other corporeal wants; and take heede only unto holy medytacyons, and ghostly feedyng and refreshyng of our souls: then shoulde we be muche more happye, than we be now, in serving and attendyng more for bodyly good than spyrytual profyte. When man once cometh unto thys perfecyon, then seeketh he consolacyon of no creature; then begynneth he to have a spyrytual ayde in God, when that he is contente wyth every fortune, as well wyth adversyte as prosperyte, conforming and referrying all hys worschype unto God, to serve and to obey hys wyll."

"As I read over these devout sentences," continued the dying Viscount, "a new light suddenly brake in upon my benighted spirit, and showed me that I was in the condition of *that* soul; being freed from all the cares of this world, and almost launched away into the next. I was now regarded as one dead, or as a fugitive in the camp and a traitor in the court, and all too much shaken by sickness ever again to appear in either; yet did I know full little how to turn me unto a holy life and the service of God. Oh! good Plantagenet, had I but fought against the fiend in mine own heart, but half so stoutly as I have done battle in mortal strife,—had I but showed unto the King of kings but half the duteous loyalty which I ever

gave unto thy father,—I had not now been left thus desolate, defamed, and out of suits with fortune; I had not now had all my ghostly labours to do, when that I have neither strength nor space wherein to perform them!"

"Good, my Lord," responded I, "you should yet be of good cheer, since I have heard it spoken from holy St. Austin, that we read of one man who was saved at the last hour, that none may despair; though but of one, that none should presume."

"Truly, young Plantagenet," hereunto replied the Viscount, I "am of good cheer, nay, I am full merry; for albeit I have fasted long and sadly, yet do I trust this night to banquet most richly in Paradise!—Howbeit, as the time when I shall speak and thou shalt hear it hastily passing away, let me go on whilst life is left unto me.—Hunger had now assailed me like a mighty foe, and sleeping and waking, night and day, I vainly looked around and clamoured for food; almost maddened at finding it came not, or that what I saw and ate of in my dreams was not real and substantial. I held Israel to be a savage and unfeeling traitor, deeming that only one of his abhorred race would have left his ancient benefactor, alone and powerless upon a bed of sickness, without some effort to administer unto his sorrow."

"In good sooth, my Lord," interposed I at this place, "I would not offend you, but yet I wot well that you erred in this matter: since that man hath too deeply felt the shaft of calamity and persecution himself, not to have compassion upon others. I was left wounded, and, perchance, dying upon

the field at Bosworth, unknown and disregarded of all, since mine only friend lay a bloody corse thereon:—and, but for the humanity of Israel and his late virtuous spouse, I had not now lived to stand by the couch of another, or to speak in vindication of my benefactor. And think not, I pray you, good my Lord, that if he be not illumined by the Christian faith, he is therefore abandoned for ever; since we who adore a God who will not that *any* should perish, may not rashly condemn even a *Jew*, of virtuous life and warm and charitable heart."

"Thou hast a generous and kindly soul, Richard Plantagenet," rejoined the Lord Lovel, "and unto somewhat of this did mine own thoughts arrive, after that my spirit had been softened and purified by much reading in that holy book of the Imitation of Our Lord; and another little tome of certain texts of the Sacred Scriptures, translated into English by Master John de Trevisa.* In the pondering upon these, I seemed, as it were, to forget time and to lose mine infirmity; and they so wrought within me, that first came sorrow and penitence into mine heart, and tears from mine eyes, such as I had never shed before. And anon came a godly joy and illumination, which made me almost to leap as I read when I began to un-

* This collection was made towards the close of the fourteenth century, and is sometimes said to have included the whole of the Scriptures; though it more probably contained only a few texts which were painted on the walls of the Chapel in Berkeley Castle, executed by command of Lord Thomas de Berkeley. Trevisa was a celebrated translator of numerous works, and Vicar of Berkeley in the county of Gloucester.

derstand how true were the words, which I had heard spoken from the blessed 'Vangil, '*Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo qui procedit dei ore Dei:*' man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word which cometh forth of the mouth of God. For albeit I was still shrewdly an hungered, yet had I now good store of the Bread of Life; and feeding upon that I freely forgave my death unto the Hebrew, and thought me already at the gate of Heaven!—But now—my strength indeed faileth,—and I must hasten to close. On the morning of yesterday, I chanced to find a crust, full hard and mouldy and black with age, such as in the days of my pride I would not have cast unto a hound that I held in any favour; on the which, howbeit, I now seized with thankfulness and joy, eating it with much devotion, as the Blessed Sacrament sent unto me before my death: for I say unto thee, Richard, that until I partake of the food of angels, there shall no other pass between my dying lips!"

Albeit I saw that it was now altogether in vain, I could not but essay as I might to support the sinking Lord Lovel; still declaring mine earnest hope that he was not yet so shrewdly distempered as he judged of himself, nor that food and the remedies which I bore, might not render him good service. "Nay," answered he again, "that cannot be; for the cold damp of my former lodging, and that which I took upon my first coming hither, hath stricken unto my very heart, and brought on a fever of such consuming fierceness, that nothing now can allay it. The wise in physic do indeed tell, that much fasting will pre-

sently starve a fever out of man's frame, but it hath not been so with me; though, peradventure, my sinful anger against Israel when I deemed that he had so foully deserted me, hath shaken me as shrewdly as lack of sustenance. Yet be this as it will, my sickness hath now risen unto a height as no medicines can stay it; albeit I bless God that I have found a sure and faithful Physician for my soul."

Hereupon I did urge unto him hope of life no longer, seeing that his pallid and sunken cheek suddenly turned paler, showing that he was now nigh unto the death, for which he was so well fitted: but, that his worldly desires should be fulfilled in as much as they might, I demanded of him, in great sorrow, if there were aught where I could yet serve him.

"Mourn not for me, noble youth," responded he, "though thou hast so gentle and kindly a heart, that I feel much sadness that I cannot guerdon thy love towards me; or give thee aught but thanks for thy many and courteous services. Yet, to be still more thy debtor, there is one thing,—and that of some hazard,—which I would fain have thee do for me when I am departed; the which, only my long-increasing infirmity hath kept me from braving for myself.—It is to ascend the secret stair out of this cell, which will lead thee into a broad fire-place in mine own chamber above; wherein, beneath the middle window, thou wilt find a panel in the wall, sculptured with the devices of my house.—Firmly press down the body of the ramping lion on the 'scutcheon, and a spring will be loosened that holds up the shield, which, falling

down, will discover unto thee a little secret closet. Therein is a steel casket containing some gold, and divers letters from certain partisans of the house of York, who are now living and unsuspected, touching a rising against Harry of Lancaster.—These I charge thee to take forth, and destroy as surely and as speedily as thou mayest, that none may hereafter find them, and bring others into infamy or death. For the gold which is in the casket, take it unto thyself, good Richard, I give it thee all, and would it were far greater.—Now—Farewell!—may the blessing of a dying friend rest upon thee!—and I lack only a confessor, that I too might have absolution and benediction."

Unto this I replied, that I would assuredly undertake his trust, and, if he so desired, would go forth to seek him a confessor; but he answered me that he might not then permit it, for that death was dealing so shrewdly with him, that he should eftsoons depart. "And thou forgettest," added he, "that by thus doing thou wouldest hazard thine own safety; and, perchance, that of the holy man who should come unto me. And in sooth," he faintly continued, "though I would fain be shriven and absolved by the church, that so my spirit might be the better fitted to appear at the throne of God, yet do I well trust that I am so accounted in heaven, unto which I have devoutly confessed; and so may pass away in hope, albeit unhouselled and unannealed with the sacraments of confession or extreme-unction."

"In truth, my good Lord," answered I, who was inwardly praying for him upon my rosary, "I do well believe it, and my poor orisons shall not be

wanting that your spirit may rise speedily unto glory."

"Thanks, thanks, good Richard, returned the Viscount, "and if no other prayers be heard for me whilst my soul is parting from her clay, if no dirge be sung over my corse, yet will I not faint even in the shadow of death; nor fear that the lack of priestly rites, all sacred though they be, shall mar my joyful entrance into Paradise."

Upon this, as it were exhausted by so much speaking, he gradually sank back, grasping my hand, and closing his eyes: so that I drew in my breath with anxious dread, thinking that his last moment was indeed come. Yet whilst I thus bent sorrowfully over him, his spirit came unto him again, and he reared him with even more seeming strength than before: but from the glazed look of his eyes, I well deemed that it was but the last brief and sudden kindling up of the taper of life, which was speedily to sink down into an immortal darkness.

Howbeit, for some short space he was again himself, and said unto me, "'Tis in vain, Plantagenet, 'tis in vain; not all thy kind offices can now save thy dying friend, or even give him a sepulchre when he shall be no more. Yet, though God hath willed it thus, I pray thee help me to don my grave-clothes, the which thou wilt find in yonder chest; being the knightly suit I ever wore both at court and in the battle.—So,—'tis well—good Richard,—but haste thee, for even now I feel my blood ceasing to flow—there,—my surcoat of arms, and my helm upon my head—that thus apparelled, as Lovel was wont to be in the day of

his power, when they who live in aftertimes shall haply find his wasted limbs and mouldered form, in this secret place, which hath been his cell and sepulchre,—they may truly know who and what he was when living; nor confound the reliques of a Lovel and a soldier, with the ashes of the ignoble dead."

I hastened to fulfil his request and speedily clothed him as he desired, and when he was so habited he thanked me, and said he felt him more at ease; not that his sickness had in aught abated, but that he was now clothed in the only shroud which those of his house were ever wont to wear. Upon my demanding of him if there were aught else wherein I might pleasure him, he replied, "nought, my most constant friend, but this—that thou wouldest bring hither yonder cross, that I may kiss it, and die in grasping the sign of our salvation.—So—now set it upon the table before me, with the holy books which have so often soothed me in mine hours of loneliness and sorrow, and have dressed my soul for its final departure; the which may indeed tell them that in future days shall light upon my bones, that Lovel died a Christian as well as a noble and a soldier."

When I had forthwith performed all that he desired, he once more essayed to speak, albeit very faintly, and said,—So,—this is well,—and now the courses being all set to sea, wherefore should the barque tarry longer? or, in good sooth, why should not the worn-out shallop which hath been so long tossed upon the wild waters, make at once for the haven where she may safely cast her anchor for ever?"

Such was the Lord Lovel's tranquillity and gentle resignation in his last hours; the which, though sweet to behold and glorious to remember, still had in them so much of sadness, that tears fell from mine eyes, and I mourned bitterly that one so rich in grace and dignity should presently cease to be upon the earth. He marked mine emotion, and full kindly counselled me to lay aside my sorrows, seeing that his had reached their termination; and that I should dry the tears which dimmed mine eyes, that I might well mark how to close up his. His tongue did now begin altogether to fail him, and his eyes looked set in his head as if their sight were gone; whilst his words came thick and obscure, so that I might scarcely hear them. Yet was his look high and stately, and his face lighted up with that unearthly lustre, which spake eloquently of a peace of mind, that his speech could but imperfectly give utterance to. But full soon came the last solemn change, wherein the dark shades of Death invaded his visage, and his sense of existence seemed to depart. Yet even in that moment of dissolution, did I pray him to give me some sign if his hope in heaven were still good; whereupon he grasped the crucifix with wondrous power, and faltered out a part of the dying words of the holy Stephen, —"*Domine—Jesu—suscipe*——" I listened for some moments joyfully, though anxiously, for the end thereof;——but on again looking towards the face of the Lord Lovel, I full soon perceived that I was alone!

CHAPTER II.

A FOREIGN ADVENTURER AND SPY ENCOUNTERED—RECRUITING IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—AND FIFTEEN YEARS OF EXILE FROM ENGLAND.

Where hast thou served?
May it please you, Sir, in all the late wars of Bohemia, Hungaria, Dalmatia, Poland; where not, Sir? I have been a poor servitor by sea and land, any time this fourteen years, and followed the fortunes of the best commanders in Christendom.

* * * * * *

Is it possible that thou shouldest disguise thyself so as I should not know thee?

BEN JONSON'S EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR.

I like thee well; wilt thou forsake thy fortune,
—— And follow me?
I am a Soldier, and now bound to France.

SHAKSPEARE.

So died the good Knight, Francis, the ninth Lord, and first Viscount, Lovel;—yet seemingly without any touch of pain, and so peacefully and silently, that even at the very moment of his departure, I knew not indeed that all was over. Howbeit, I might not long remain in doubt, but speedily saw that he was gone from this earth, and that I had now only to close his eyes, unto the which I sadly addressed myself. He had so orderly settled himself to die, that there was little left for me to perform for him; yet did I compose him so,

that he should have the semblance of one who rested after the labours of a weary day, with his head inclined upon his hand. In all things, therefore, did I fulfil his dying desires, so that if ever man should discover and open his last retreat and burial-place,* his wishes shall assuredly come to pass; inasmuch as that none will ever deem him to have been of low degree, albeit mischance denied his bones a sepulchre in holy ground.

This solemn duty done, as it now grew towards morning, I bethought me of entering the chamber whereof he had spoken, and taking thence the casket he had charged me with, whiles the day was yet young; for that I now desired to depart from that sad cell, deeming it bootless to remain there longer, since all that had kept me therein had left it for ever: and I felt me no more bound by duty or liking to stay with that poor and lifeless dust, as the jewel being now gone, the sordid case which had enclosed it was no longer worth the watching.

So forth I went from the cell up the little secret winding stair, at the top whereof I found a strong

* This discovery did not take place until the year 1708, when, in laying a new chimney at Minster-Lovel, a large vault or room was found beneath; in which appeared the entire skeleton of a man sitting at a table with books, &c. before him, whilst in another part of the chamber was a cap, the whole being in a decayed and mouldering state. It is also sometimes added, that the vault contained several barrels and jars which had held his stores; but the former part of this account rests on the witness and authority of John Manners, third Duke of Rutland, who related it in the hearing of William Cowper, Esq. Clerk of the Parliament, on May 8th, 1728; by whom it is preserved in a letter dated Hertingfordbury Park, August 9th, 1737.

door, which opened with a very hard spring upon one side of a wide and ancient hearth, behind a high settle of carved and blackened oak. So cunningly was it hidden, that no man might ever have discovered it unless the device had been shown unto him; for that the portal was formed of the stones whereof the fire-place was built set in an oaken frame. The chamber into which it led, was one of much state and richness, although it was now ruined and despoiled; partly by decay of years, and partly by the rude soldiery who had been placed therein upon the supposed death of the Lord Lovel. The broidered azure hangings were now torn and fallen piecemeal from the walls, the goodly painted window was broken, and the fair carved-work was on all sides battered and defaced; yet did I find the sculptured panel, of which I was in quest, unsuspected and undefaced beneath that curious oriel-window, some panes whereof looked into our cell. But in the chamber unto which it did rightly belong, it formed a fair and broad bay, fitting to be set out with high stands of plate at a banquet, or yield pleasant pastime towards the park, seeing that it opened on to a stone gallery or terrace without, of little height above the green-sward thereof.

I paused not long to note these things, or to mark the desolate and melancholy condition of the dead Viscount's Chamber of Estate; both because the sight thereof made me full sad, and for that I well knew that I must speed me back again through the cell to close up each entrance as securely as I might: and therefore, after looking cautiously around me, I hastened unto the panel.

opened it with a trembling hand, and soon had the steel casket safe within my bosom. I had again closed up that secret cabinet, and was once more passing quickly towards the hearth, when a strong and mournful blast of November's wind, swept in from the gallery the broken oriel-window, and, mightily shaking the chamber wherein I then was, suddenly shut the secret door with a clap of wondrous loudness; the spring thereof locking itself so firmly, that all in vain I essayed to open or even to discover it again.

Whilst I stood thus perplexed, and pondering how I might best escape from the jeopardy into which that mischance had thrown me, I heard the sound of footsteps approaching the chamber, whereupon I also came forward, either to leap from the window, if space were given me so to do, or to brave all hazards as I might; but in nowise to discover the passage whereby I had entered, nor even to be seen near the secret door, lest others should find the means to open it and so descend unto the cell. He who presently came in unto the apartment, was a tall and stout man of a martial air, as though he had sometime been wont to bear arms; and indeed he was now habited in the coarse and soiled dress, and dull iron of a common soldier. His face methough re a look of craft and reckless boldness, as if he nad been one of those wandering foreign lance-men, who follow any leader, and do any deed for gain, the which were of old oft-times brought into England to fill up the king's armies, though much to the molestation and disquiet of the realm; and of a truth he was no other than a stout and subtle lanz-knecht,

who could well keep him by spur and spear, wherever there was tumult, war, or spoil.

I did thus curiously look upon his features, for that they seemed unto me as if I had more than once seen them afore; of the which I was full soon convinced, when he accosted me in a mocking voice with—"Ha! what my young master! art thou here too? methinks we meet full often of late; and which way might you get entrance, my forward stripling?"

"Truly," answered I, with such boldness as I could best assume on the instant, "truly, it asks but small warrant to enter a house where there is neither lord in the chamber nor lacquey in the hall; and so I even wandered hither, and was gazing awhile upon this old apartment; but for our often meeting in good sooth I wot but little."

"Ay, marry," responded the gibing soldier, "that I trow is because you are like most other great men who forget their friends; natheless, I know ye as well here as at Ely monastery or Leicester castle, or in West-Cheap when the city-watch is marching, or in the Red Rose hostel of Gideon Staples at Elveston;—when some were in shrewd hazard of being hung for a traitor, had not I been at hand to cover their safe withdrawing."

Unto this I exclaimed in great amazement, "what sayest thou? wert thou the clerk then who told me of the overthrow at Stoke, and showed me where Israel of Castile was waiting for me?"

"Ay, by St. Nicholas! was I, my young springald," responded the rude soldier, for that I was his debtor and had so covenanted with him; and I ever keep true touch to mine employers."

"Scarcely so, methinks," answered I, "if, as I take it, you are one Bernard Schalken, a Brabanter, who served Sir Gilbert De Mountford, and knavishly left and betrayed him, with certain letters that were intrusted unto his charge."

"Content thee, content thee, stripling, it skills not what thou thinkest of that act," responded the lanceman, "though I be in sooth Bernard Schalken; howbeit, as I would anon fain have thee frank with me, I will first be so with thee, therefore open thine ears and take this lesson from an old soldier and traveller, if thou shouldest have life given thee to use it. I was born to a hardy lanzknecht, on a march in Germany; though I speak you most tongues, having served in most countries. Now you may well wot that we Flemings and Almaines, who live by spur and spear, must be little dainty as to what lord we will serve, though we be true as blade to pomel when we have once engaged us, until our paction be out: so Sir Gilbert De Mountford was overseen, in that, when my time was up, he struck no new bargain with me. Thus might I leave him, yet with a clear faith, and take service with King Harry, who held me to spy and peer after such forward Yorkists as thyself; and I may now tell thee, that another day in London after thy brawl in West-Cheap, had seen thee in hold, young Sir, with your consorts, Sir Gilbert De Mountford, Master St. Leger, and others of the like sort."

Then did I full anxiously demand of Bernard touching the imprisonment of the good knight, whereupon he told me, how having been in great straits from suspicion of being in league with the

Yorkists, he was at length arrested and sent unto the Tower, with others of his party, and landed at the Traitors' Bridge. "Once secured there," added the soldier, "Sir Gilbert had but brief space given him either for sorrow or shriving; since a short hour for confession and prayer, was all that passed between the jailer's bolt, the priest's rosary, and the sharp axe of the executioner!"

I looked much aghast at these tidings, the truth whereof I did almost question, because they were uttered in a rude and gibing voice, yet too soon did I find that Bernard spake full sooth, and that my former friend, the stout and generous Sir Gilbert, had indeed perished untimely upon the scaffold. In his fall, I saw, with much fear and sadness, the hazard wherein I myself stood of dying like a traitor were I taken, and I resolved if I might now escape, at once to cross the seas and become a soldier; since to be slain in a brave, though bloody war, where I might sink into a valorous grave, seemed, unto my mind, but little pain in comparison thereof.

But whiles I thus pondered, the rude Bernard continued, "Ay, by the spear of St. Michael! stripling, you may well look grave, for that I have told you is as true as the 'Vangils; and you had gone with the rest, had you not fled as you did, for you neither guerdoned my favour nor bought my silence."

"And how might I deem," answered I unto the wily adventurer, "how was I to think that such pay was looked for?"

"Gold makes the truest breastplate," replied

Bernard thereunto, "but that debt you may yet wipe out. Howbeit, as I guessed that all Yorkists would ride the same road, my barb and I set out towards Stoke to meet you. When at Elveston I encountered the Hebrew you wot of, and although, to make better espial, I had clad me in a clerk's doublet, yet, to tell you truly, I had as lief seen the Henker, as the Jew; since I owed him certain moneys for drinkings and other disports, for King Harry gives good employ, though small pay and bare quarters. I was pondering how best to avoid him or give him some sort of quittance, for my sword is alway heavier than my pouch,—when he at once knew me, accosted me, and proffered to blot out my score, and give me a noble to boot, so I would truly look after thy safety, and seize from thee such letters as might bring thee into hazard; the which I agreed to, and well, I trow, did I keep my pledge."

Hereupon I demanded of the rude soldier if he now knew aught of Israel, whereunto he answered, by telling me of certain matters which I perceived had chanced in mine absence, and of which I had not yet heard. He told me of the hazard into which the Jew had fallen, from being suspected of holding secret intercourse with the Lord Lovel, whom divers thought was yet living, though his retreat might not be found; and farther, that some week past Israel had been seized by certain spies lurking near the Viscount's dwelling. Mine heart sank within me as he recounted the Hebrew's after fate, how he had been fearfully menaced, to make him give full and true answer to all which might be demanded; but albeit

they vainly sought to terrify him by declaring that horrid machines of torture should rend asunder his limbs whiles that he was yet quick, still did the brave and constant Israel, unbeliever as he might be, forget not his pledge, and failed not in his faith unto the Lord Lovel. His resolution sank not even in the sight of his torments, but he remained ever firm to the surety he had given, and never revealed the escape or hiding-place of his benefactor. I may here note farther, as my last knowledge concerning him, that at a future time I learned, that from the very hour he became suspected of a league with the Viscount, they who seized upon him, left not to persecute him, while there was hope of his making any disclosure either by fraud or force; and when it was found that neither might prevail any thing, his goods were confiscated, and himself sent out of the realm, under the law that all Jews were banished from England for ever. Thus was he never left at freedom, until his guards had seen him on board the barque which was to bear him beyond the sea. What afterward became of him, or unto what country he went, I never might hear, yet do I trust that he ended his life in peace, although in exile; for this will I say of him for mine own part, and this doth he well deserve of my report, that the blessing of him that was ready to perish was upon him, and that he caused the heart of the fatherless to sing for joy.

When the lance-man had told me of these sad tidings, he concluded with "And now, I prythee, youth, having answered all thy demands, tell me who thou art thyself? Thou canst scarce be the Jew's son, though thou shouldest be a cockerell

of some rare line, to draw me a good ten pound out of his purse; for such was the least penny that I owed him."

Hereupon I answered, though with some doubt and pausing, that it mattered but little unto him as to what race I came of: but that I was the orphan of a brave soldier who fell upon Bosworth-field.

"Art thou so, by St. Martin of Tours!" exclaimed the gibing Bernard, "then doth that, with thy name of Richard, thy fresh ruddy looks and blue eyes, spell at length———; what I know full well, though I speak it not now. Nay, farther, stripling, it shall be safe for the future, and thou mayest forthwith depart, so thou wilt tell me of one other thing, which is, the secret way into this chamber: for I can well deem that thou knowest it, and perchance somewhat more. And now," continued he with a full stern voice, "mark me, boy; hitherto have I been merry with thee, but as I am once again the royal Harry's follower, set to keep this mansion for him,—I will have this matter from thee strait, or by the blessed Melchior of Cologne! I will send thee trussed neck and heels unto the court, as they carried thy father to his grave, with a pursuivant to declare thy lofty birth unto the king! Choose, then, briefly, and at once."

I had afore noted the ruffian-like violence of this soldier, and unto this end had drawn me as nigh unto the window as I might, feeling in my bosom for a sharp little dagger which the Lord Lovel had given unto me when I left him for London; deeming that I might yet find strength enow to

plunge it into the lance-man should he closely assail me. As, therefore, he bade me to determine upon what I would now do, I hastily brake forth into that gallery beyond the oriel-window, which, as I have said, overhung the park, and only saying, "This, then, is my choice!" I suddenly leaped therefrom and shot forward, with the speed of a shaft set free from the bowstring.

Although it was my good hap to make mine escape in the heavy mist of a November morning which covered the way I took, yet might I eftsoons hear the loud shouting and heavy tread of my pursuer and his followers; so that I was full fain hastily to return towards the secret passage and cell of the dead Viscount, wherein I deemed that I had left his body for time and for eternity. I well knew that search would there be vain, could I but once gain an entrance, and then, under the deep shadow of night, I might come forth unseen and hasten my flight unto the sea-coast or London; for my royal sire had long since told me, that fugitives be safer in a crowded city than in solitude. I ran with much haste, yet, from often slipping upon the grass that was wet with the mist and dew, my pursuers gained fast upon me, and being without breath to utter either a cry or a vow unto any of the holy saints to aid me, I well nigh deemed that all was lost. Nevertheless I still kept forward with unslackened speed, albeit I could see the forms of them that followed me hastily coming on through the fog, and heard full near and loudly their shouts and whistling as they called upon each other to mark the way in which I was running. At length, however, with spent

strength and lost breath, I suddenly plunged me into the mouth of that hidden passage and vanished from the sight of my pursuers, whose hasty footsteps I soon marked approaching; and I might hear them, and specially Bernard, profanely swear by the mass that they had missed me, they knew not how, for that I took that way and then disappeared like Friar Rush: but they added, moreover, that though the fiend himself were to aid me, I should not 'scape them so; for that the park should be closely watched day and night, the gate locked and guarded, and the roads around planted with those who should soon stop my travelling thence.

As the sound of their voices died away upon mine ear, I went back unto the cell, in much sadness for the loss of the only friends which I possessed on earth. Israel of Castile being now a banished beggar, Sir Gilbert de Mountford and Master St. Leger cut off upon a bloody scaffold, and the last and noblest relique of King Richard, was already a black and stiffened corse before me. There he sate, so solemn, yet so calm, in the very place of his life, that I could almost have called upon him to aid me with his counsel in that hour of doubt and sorrow; and albeit I was then so young, and might well have feared to have been the companion of a dead corse in that gloomy vault, yet did the thought that mine own life hung by so frail a tie, keep my heart from all other terrors. I therefore sate sad and silent, until I bethought me of sending up prayers for mine own deliverance, blended with mine orisons for the timely-departed soul of the Lord Lovel:

in doing whereof my tranquillity and strength returned, and I waited full patiently for the hour which should give me back unto freedom.

That night, as I do well remember me, came down heavily, yet did I linger until the welkin was covered with darkness, ere I left the funeral cell for the last time, and quickly and cautiously closed up its narrow outer entrance in such wise as it might never be suspected by mortal man, by breaking down the earth into it with my sword; well knowing that the other end was past any discovery. Thus, with a sad heart, I bade farewell unto the mouldering dust of the noble Lord Lovel, and betook myself unto a desolate part of the park which overlooked a narrow and lonely country lane. Yet was not mine escape thence effected without much hazard, since I might often hear the heavy tread or low voice of the night-watching guards who were set to intercept me, as they marched about between the shaking trees and over the dark underwoods, humming as they best might, some rude ballad of battle foughten in the days of the olden time. Howbeit, as I now well knew the place which I was traversing, I warily passed them by, and at length got me clear of the boundaries of Minster-Lovel.

After crossing divers wild fields and passing through many dark lanes, towards the break of day I heard the heavy and stately beat of a drum sounding forth the slow old English march: and anon I found me near a little hostel, about which some dozen soldiers, but scantily clothed and armed, were gathered, as if rousing them after the night-halt and making them ready for the day's

travel. I sought to pass them by unnoted, but he who seemed to be the constable, or leader thereof, having already marked me, loudly called unto me with "Holla! comrade, what may you be, and whither away so early?"

I answered unto him with my safest and truest reply, that I was the orphan son of a soldier who was slain at Bosworth, and was then travelling in search of entertainment and employ.

"Then if you lack these," responded the constable, "by the sword of St. Paul! you're in good luck; for here you may have both, as you seem a stout young stripling and a soldier's son. But be you what you may, I trow that here's a safe sanctuary for you, whether you are flying from the claw of the sergeant or the Bishop's sompnour; and whether you were bred to the cart or the cloister, only mount helm and spear and you're made gentle at once, being upon the high road to fortune, full soon to become either a knight or a noble!"

"And whose quarrel must I draw sword in?" demanded I.

"Why, in no less an one," answered the leader "than that of Francis the second, the most noble Duke of Bretagne, against Charles of France. For ye shall wot, my brave comrade, that Edward, Lord Widvile, the queen's uncle, is leading forth a goodly party of volunteers unto his aid: the main body whereof hath marched on before towards the Isle of Wight, where we take shipping. And now, my mates, don your arms, and make you all ready for setting forth with what haste you may, whilst I give our new fellow a

stout breakfast to make him march the better. By the bones!" continued the prating soldier, drawing me with him into the hostel, "fore God! brother, but you're in excellent luck to have lighted upon us thus; since in another hour we should have been upon our travel, and within five days upon the seas; when you would have lost the good tide which now floweth so fairly onward unto your fortune."

Thereupon I entered the hostel with the constable, not for that I trusted aught unto his glosing words or mighty promises, or deemed that I should escape the many pains and sorrows of a soldier's life, but because I saw that by following the Lord Widvile over the seas, I should be well removed from mine enemies, and might peradventure get me unto the Dutchess Margaret of Burgundy, who was the friend of my house, and so arrive at some better fortune. With these thoughts, I say, I went with the constable into the hostel; where, after having well fed and strengthened me, I did engage to serve in that cause as a voluntary in France, for so long as there should be war there, to be found in horse and arms, with four-pence by the day in sterling money.

The chiefest passages of that war between France and Bretagne, he conserved as great and public matters, which enter not into the story of my life, and so ask but small recital in this place. Whilst I served under the Lord Widvile, I was fain to keep secret not only my lofty birth, but also my favour unto King Richard, because of the hate in which he was held by that noble, for having put to death his nephew Anthony, and

divers others of his house and party, for treason. Howbeit, the Lord Widvile himself was not long my leader, for upon his marching unto the relief of St. Aubin du Cormier, all the power of France advanced against him under Louis de Tremouille, and the two armies might not part without doing battle. This, therefore, did we fight on Monday, the 28th day of July, in the year of Christ 1488, and a most fatal time did it prove; for the Lord Widvile, and the most part of the four hundred English which he had led into Bretagne, were slain, with 6000 Bretons and full 1200 of the French. I 'scaped from the field, sorrowful and wounded; yet lingered I still in Bretagne, as the soldier of the Lady Anne, the young dutchess thereof, until the war between her state and the realm of France was at length cunningly ended, by her becoming the queen of Charles VIII. in the year 1491. The king won over her counsellors to consent thereunto, by weighty bribes and goodly promises; and herself by importunity and terror, for that she well saw she must be either his wife or his captive. Whilst speaking of them, I may note in this place, that Charles was a well-formed man, though somewhat short, and of a fair face, yet having large strong features, and dark hair: the Dutchess Anne was a young maiden of good stature and comely visage, and she was wont to be clad in a vest of azure velvet and white ermine-skin powdered, with a robe of red velvet over all.

This time passed, I did next betake me unto the bold and noble Lady Margaret of York, the third wife of Charles the Hardy, the last French

duke of Burgundy, and sister unto my royal father; with whom I found right good entertainment and favour. She was one who ever sought to magnify and advance her own house, yet did I never declare my kindred unto her; albeit she made me one of the chief of that guard which alway attended upon her person, being all men of gentle birth,—and though she was wont often to employ me in private services, familiarly calling me cousin, and saying that I had somewhat of the look of a Plantagenet, and specially the very trick of her brother Richard's visage. But natheless I disclosed not unto her the truth, for that I marked her to be beguiled with one Perkin Warbeck, the offspring of a merchant, whom she cunningly tutored to personate Richard, Duke of York, the second son of her brother, King Edward IV.; and so sent him unto England, where he was well received and his tale believed of many, and for a long space he kept the realm in tumult. This was, as I now think, about November, in the year of grace 1492, but I leave it unto story to recount his adventures; only noting that he uttered divers foul and false leasings against my father, affirming him to have murdered the young king, Edward V., in the Tower, some seven years before, when himself most wondrously escaped the like fate, albeit he could neither declare how, nor even in what nation he had passed that time. Yet being, as he was, of good presence and features, and fair-spoken withal, he satisfied the demands of many who rose up in arms and followed his fortunes; and these were not of the common sort only, but divers noble and worshipful men believed and

affirmed his pretences to be true. But though some of his aiders thought thus, others befriended him only from discontent at Harry Tudor, who, as they deemed, had not largely enough rewarded them; and others again from a base desire to prosper by tumult and by spoil. Howbeit, all this time my truer and fairer claim to be a king —as I then thought it—was left unminded of any; and I felt much misliking and jealousy, that a low-born adventurer was thus again preferred unto the real son of a sovereign; though, perchance, that very neglect saved me from the defeat and disgrace of Warbeck, his flight, imprisonment, and other sorrows, the which were ended only by the axe and the scaffold.

It chanced that, about this season, I became acquainted with certain of the cunning artists, who had aided in rearing those stately buildings in the realm of Burgundy, which have been imitated in divers fine and curious palaces erected in England.* Truly, I think that the world cannot

* The highly ornamental style of domestic architecture which is considered as characteristic of the Tudor period, was certainly derived from the very rich edifices erected under the patronage of the Duke of Burgundy above mentioned, between the years 1419 and 1467; fine examples of which are to be found in the Maison de la Pucelle and the Hall of Justice at Rouen, and similar edifices at Bruxelles, Ghent, and Bruges. Mansions of this character,—wherein the features of the old gloomy castle were enriched and blended with a more stately and convenient style of building,—were erected in England in the reign of Henry VI.; but perhaps a more splendid instance was given in the royal palace of Sheen, built by Henry VII., after a fire there in 1500, to which he gave his own title of Richmond. It is related by Speed, that the "curious and exquisite building"

show more gorgeous or princely fabrics, than those set up under the rule of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, and specially his own palace at Dijon; wherein the dark, and rude, and lowering walls of the embattled castle, or lofty watch-tower, fitted only for scenes of strife or blood, were lost in the richly-wrought turret, the gay window and gallery full rarely carved, and the broad and stately gateway; forming most glorious pleasances for the court, the triumph, the tourney, and the masque. After this manner, then, did I learn much of the art of building goodly mansions, the which in my later years hath been of great benefit unto me; and hath even provided me with a home and a retreat, when all other shelters have failed me in mine old age.

Having long outlived Duke Charles of Burgundy, the noble Lady Margaret at length departed this life and went unto God, at her seignory of Malines, in Brabant, in the year 1503. But ere she died, she caused me to be called unto her chamber; and saying that I had been unto her a true and faithful soldier, and forasmuch as that I was of her own country, and, as she verily thought, her kinsman,—holding me, peradventure, to be some natural son of King Richard,—she would intrust unto me certain rich jewels, for the fulfilment of her last desires in England; the which she prayed me rightly to perform, as I would prosper me in this world and the next. Hereupon I promised her true service, and she com-

both of this place and of his chapel at Westminster, were first learned by himself and Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester, in France, and thence brought into England.

manded me to take her coronet of gold and gems unto the chapel of the Virgin, St. George, and St. Edward, at Windsor, wherein lay the body of her royal brother, King Edward IV., and give it unto the brethren there, in guerdon for divers masses to be said for the health of both their souls. Unto the Lady Elizabeth, his queen, at Bermondsey Abbey, she bequeathed her red velvet robe, broidered with golden broom-flowers, being the Plantagenet badge; together with a tablet of chased gold, wrought with the visitation of the Virgin unto St. Elizabeth; and to her dear kinswoman, the Lady Bride, the queen's daughter, she gave a golden bridal collar for her neck, with precious stones hanging thereat, and a pair of paternosters of coral and silver. The noble dutchess did also farther devise unto the high altar of the Gray-Friars' church at Leicester, where the corse of King Richard had been so rudely sepultured, a chain of gold enamelled in ancient wise, having the name of God upon every link, for daily prayers for the health of her own soul and that of her royal brother. In brief, she bestowed divers other rich and costly gifts, for masses to be sung for herself and those of her house who were deceased, in every place where they were sepultured; and unto myself she gave fifty marks of gold,—£33. 6*s.* 8*d.*—for seeing that her will herein was duly fulfilled. She did then give unto me her discharge from all other earthly service that I owed unto her, and I left her with divers assurances of fidelity; not without much sadness and heaviness of heart, but I had now seen so many who had befriended me

gradually pass away from me into the devouring grave, that by this time I was well nigh steeled against any new touch of such calamity.

Thus died the gallant Dutchess of Burgundy, much to the joy of Harry Tudor; unto whom the flattering followers of Lancaster were wont to say she was as Juno of old was unto the wandering Prince Æneas, moving heaven and earth against him,* as Virgilius hath full sweetly written—"*Arma virumque cano,*" which every scholar knoweth; or in our ruder English,

> "Arms be my song, and him whom heaven's decree
> Drave from the Troian coasts to Italie;
> Who, ere he reach'd the fair Lavinian strand,
> Long space was toss'd o'er ocean and on land,
> By the great powers who rule supreme above,
> And chief by Juno, angry queen of Jove:
> Whose rage relentless him pursued afar
> With vengeful storms, with foemen, and with war!"

Howbeit, though Henry of Lancaster was thus likened unto Æneas, yet might I never note the semblance betwixt them; for that the Troian prince was both pious and noble, whereas he of the red rose was only a simular of virtue, exceeding artful, and all devoted unto covetise and oppressive gathering of riches.

I have but little more to add of my long sojourn and exile in France,—when I have noted that I saw the body of the Lady Margaret sepultured in the church of the Cordeliers, in Malines, and returned into Burgundy, to receive those

* This circumstance is also related by Bernard Andreas, the contemporary historian of Henry VII.

goods which she had devoted unto holy works in England; after which I journeyed hither to perform her will. At length, about the beginning of April, in 1503, I left Burgundy, and travelled with what haste I might unto Harfleur, whence I forthwith set sail and landed me at the Isle of Wight; it being now fifteen years since I had last left it for Bretagne, with the army of the hapless Lord Widvile.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN, AND FIRST ADVENTURE IN ENGLAND.

—As he entered the church—he beheld her alone in the midst of the aisle prostrate upon Euphrasia's tomb. The piety, the gratitude of Olympia, the sanctity of the place—and the recollection of past times, to which these circumstances gave birth, made a powerful impression upon the heart of Theophilus. He advanced towards Olympia; the sound of his feet drew her attention, and she turned her face bathed in tears to see who it was. Theophilus approached and knelt beside her—and she beheld him with astonishment.

MAD. DE GENLIS' VEILLÉES DU CHATEAU.

THUS did I once more spring upon the shores of my native country with a warm and joyful heart; for albeit in mine exile I had seen the red vineyards of Burgundy, and felt the warm suns of Languedoc, and heard the gentle speech of Paris and the court of King Charles,—yet did I ever think that in mine own land the yellow cornfields looked more plenteous, the colder skies more healthful, and my countrymen more artless and virtuous, though of blunter manners and ruder speech. It was now a season of peace and prosperity—excepting the exactions of Harry Tudor, —throughout the realm; which seemed, as it were resting and reviving from the wars and tumults wherewith it had long been disquieted, even by the very children of the soil and the foes of its

own household which are ever the worst: and I bethought me, as I looked upon this tranquillity, of those rude old verses of the ancient chronicler written now some two hundred years past, wherein he saith,—

"England is a well good land! I ween of each land blest!
Set in the ending of the world, all in the healthful west;
The blue sea goeth him about, he standeth like an isle,
And little may his foemen dare unless it be with guile!"*

And now with all speed I hastened me unto the chapel at Windsor, where King Edward lay; to perform the will of the Lady Margaret there, that place being first and chiefest in my road. I reached thereunto about the hour of *Nones*, on the third of the Calends of May, being Saturday, the twenty-ninth day of April, and the birthday of the noble King Edward IV., who was a great benefactor unto the castle and chapel of Windsor; and for the health of whose soul I devoutly joined the good canons in those prayers, which our church hath appointed to be said on the anniversary of a patron deceased.—The brethren received me with wondrous goodwill, and constrained me to lodge that night in their college; though perchance, part of their courtesy might

* The above verses, very slightly modernised, are taken from the commencement of Robert of Gloucester's metrical chronicle of England; the author of which is supposed to have been a monk of Gloucester Abbey, sent to reside at Oxford with the youth there belonging to that church. His real name is not known, but he is believed to have flourished and died about A. D. 1280, the beginning of the reign of Edward I.; and consequently to have been one of the earliest poets of England.

spring from the costly gift which I brought them, and from my gallant habit as the Duchess of Burgundy's soldier; being a bright suit of plate-armour, a blue velvet jazerine surcoat, and a sword and dagger in red scabbards. When that our devotions were ended, the sacristan led me to behold that most marvellous and princely chapel; showing me the stalls and banners of the famous knights of the garter, the high-altar covered with a rich black cloth-of-gold, given thereunto by the victorious founder King Edward III., and the fair tombs of such as had been buried in that place.

Of all these sepulchres I well wot that the one reared over the corse of the royal Edward of York, was the most noble and stately. It standeth in an arch close on the north side of the high-altar, and is wrought in wondrous wise of pierced church-work, being all of polished steel gilded, and made after the semblance of folding gates between four towers. The body lieth within, beneath a pavement of touchstone; and above it is the king's jupon of his coat-armour, covered with blue and crimson velvet, with the ensigns of France and England 'broidered thereon in pearl and gold, interwoven with divers rubies; the which trophy of honour hath, ever since his funeral, been hung over his grave.

The sacred calm and silence, and the holy grandeur of that spot, seemed to bring back unto my mind those days when my young feet were wont to wander in the cathedral at Ely, or around my father's tomb in the church of the Gray-Friars at Leicester; and towards the close of day I again went alone into the chancel, telling the good

custos, or decanus as he is now called, Christopher Urswicke, that I would fain pray a while in secret on that evening, since early on the morrow I must hasten forward on my journey. It was then, enwrapped in thought, that I drew nigh unto the royal tomb by the high-altar, and, kneeling there, prayed audibly unto God and the Virgin for the salvation of all my house; and specially for King Edward, the Dutchess Margaret, my noble cousin the Lady Bride Plantagenet, and King Richard, whom I called my father. As these orisons escaped from my lips, I heard a gentle voice near me exclaim, "Holy St. Edward!—my cousin, and the son of King Richard!" whereupon I started, and, looking around, beheld that a leaf of one of the gilded gates of King Edward's tomb was open, and that within was a maiden seeming also to be in prayer. She was clothed in a white habit, such as was worn by novices of the order of St. Austin, and the faded light was yet enough to show me that it was indeed no other than the Lady Bride at her father's sepulchre; now most wondrously increased both in beauty and in stature since I had last beheld her.

Hereupon I hastily arose in much confusion, but as she was about to depart, I noted that in her surprise her rosary had fallen from her hand, and I forthwith entered the tomb and restored it unto her; saying, albeit with a hesitating voice, "Believe not, lady, that I knew of your presence in this place, or came hither to trespass on your secret prayers and duteous piety. Indeed you may well deem that what I have now uttered is not to be spoken lightly, seeing that mine own

safety is so much involved therein: nevertheless, I rest me securely upon the good faith of the Lady Bride Plantagenet."

"Stranger," responded she, hastily drawing her robe around her, as if anxious to avoid a more perfect recognition on my part, and yet speaking in a voice so sweet and gentle that it came upon mine hearing like the soft swellings of distant music;—"Stranger, you have in sooth awakened my wonder: yet whoever you may be, whether another false adventurer from Burgundy, or the true son of the blood-stained Richard, your words with me are as if they had never been spoken; since I have neither desire to expose thee unto danger, nor aught to do with the world or its vain-glorious honours."

As she spake thus, her visage became suddenly crimsoned over, yet was it but for a moment, as anon her pure and eloquent blood flowed onward in its wonted course, and her face resumed again its tranquil fairness; such as the still lake shows unto heaven, when the passing gale hath gone by, and the light ruffle which it called forth hath died upon the clear waters. When I last saw the Lady Bride, there was much of the glad look of childhood in her bright blue eyes, and the rich abundance of her hair of paly gold; and those golden locks did still remain even more beauteous than before, but methought that her merry glance was now shaded by a musing melancholy, which shall be full rarely noted in the countenance of one so young. Having awhile marked her in silence, listening with wondrous delight unto her voice, I now essayed to answer her; telling her, that albeit I

was indeed from Burgundy, and even from her noble kinswoman the late dutchess, yet was I no false adventurer who sought to disquiet the realm, nor was my noble father aught of that which the world was wont to call him. I then told her of the Lady Margaret's decease, of her mission which had brought me unto England, and specially of that touching the good Queen Elizabeth and herself; wherein, I added, I could not but rejoice, since it would lead me again to hear the voice of one who was so passing fair.

"I pray you, good stranger," replied the noble damsel, "I pray you to cease this flattery; for, sooth to say, I am alway but little minded to listen unto such speech, but at no time less than this; seeing the sacredness of the place wherein we stand, and the sorrow which must be in the heart of an orphan, who walketh over all that is morta of both her parents."

"Blessed Virgin!" exclaimed I in wonder, "of both, lady! saidst thou of both?"

"Ay, stranger," answered she, "that did I in sooth, for the good Queen Elizabeth is stretched beside her lord in this sepulchre, dying at the Abbey of Bermondsey: unto whose souls may God be gracious!"

"Then, lady," responded I, "unto you belong all the gifts of the noble dutchess, which should have been possessed by your royal mother, the 'broidered velvet robe and the golden tablet of St. Elizabeth; together with the bequests which she sendeth unto yourself, a bridal collar of gold and gems, and a rosary of coral and silver."

"I trust, that the good dutchess is in Paradise!"

said the Lady Bride, looking upwards as methought with a heavenly glance, "but her gifts, saving the tablet and the rosary, are not for me; since pass but a brief time and I shall be vested in a robe that allows of no other, and her bridal collar may be never worn by one who will eftsoons be consecrated to the ter as the spouse of Christ!"

"How! lady," again did I exclaim, "so soon! and do you in very truth retire from the world, even whiles you must be the delight of every heart and eye which knoweth or beholds you?"

"Even so," replied the princess, "and for this cause am I come hither, to say my last orisons, and to look, perchance, for the last time upon the sepulchre of my father and mother; and, then, bidding farewell unto the world for ever, to retreat into the convent whereunto I have been long vowed and professed, for on St. Martin's eve* shall I receive the veil, and begin my spiritual life even from mine earthly birthday. You may well see, then, courteous stranger, that the costly gifts you bear are not for me; yet if you will bestow them, here and at Bermondsey, for the health of the departed souls of my house, I will hold myself much your debtor, and will cease not to bear you long within my memory."

"Enough, most blessed Lady Brlde," answered

* The Princess Bride was born at Eltham Palace on the eve of St. Martin, Friday, November 10th, 1480; and was baptized in the chapel there the day following by Edward Story, Bishop of Chichester. She was professed to Dartford Priory early in life, but was probably not consecrated before the age of twenty-five, in the year 1505, when her birthday again fell upon a Friday.

I, "by the cross of St. George, it shall be done! for to live a moment in your memory, is dearer unto me than to have shield and banner hung over the proudest of yonder stalls. But for thee, lady, thou hast been full many years hidden within the dearest remembrance of Richard Plantagenet, for even before he saw thee, thou wert most wondrously impictured there; but after bearing thee from the falling scaffold at thy sister's coronation.—"

"Ha! what sayest thou!" exclaimed the Lady Bride thereunto, "was it then thee to whom I am indebted for life? Full often, indeed, hath the tale been told me that I was saved, perchance from death, by a brave youth of goodly form and courteous manners, even whilst the scaffold fell beneath us, but who afterward was nowhere to be found; and oft-times have I desired to behold my deliverer. But surely one so brave and gentle as thou art, can never be the son of so foul and blood-stained a tyrant and traitor as Richard!"

As she thus spake, I felt my cheek glow and mine heart beat high in defence of mine injured father, whilst the mild speech and deportment of the Lady Bride became lofty and impassioned; and though I would fain have declared unto her that much wrong was herein done unto his memory, ere I might so reply she continued thus in a voice of indignant sorrow. "Oh! I may never cease to forget how the unnatural Gloucester, albeit he was himself of the house of York, made his way unto the crown even through the blood of his own kindred! Tell not *me*, although thou mayest be indeed his son,—tell not *me* that he was ma-

ligned, whose dear and guileless brothers were given to an untimely death, by him who was called their protector, as in sooth he should have been. Oh, Edward! Oh, Richard! beloved companions of my childhood! when shall I cease to remember your most cruel fate, or to execrate the very name of him who so fully wrought your ruin?"

"Lady," interposed I at this place, much disconcerted between her hatred of my father and mine own admiration of herself, "lady, I beseech you to credit not the slander; I have heard him solemnly disavow the destruction of your noble brothers, and Richard was all too brave a king to dip his hands in innocent blood: none did ever yet deny his valour, and remember you that he who dares to fight, dares not to murder. Believe it, the princes fell by the act of God, or how might my father have gone forth so undauntedly unto his last battle as I indeed beheld him, with so deep a sin unanswered upon his soul? He was in truth no such monster in his mind, nor yet deformed in body as some do now unblushingly aver;* the which, perchance, you may formerly have beheld. For mine own part, albeit I saw him but in his tent the night before his death, and in the last

* This passage appears to refer to the contemporary description of Richard contained in the Latin History of the Kings of England by John Rosse or Rous, commonly called the Antiquary of Warwick, who died in 1491, and from whom Sir Thomas More gave the account already mentioned. The substance of Rosse's information is, that Richard was weak and little of body, low of stature, having a short face, and unequal shoulders. Sir Thomas More, Hall the historian, and others, have increased these circumstances into positive deformity.

agonies thereof, yet may his goodly form and speech, and his tender and noble bearing, even in those solemn moments, never pass from my memory whilst life shall be left unto me; and, lady, I should deem myself to be all unworthy of your kindred, were I not willing to defend by sword and speech the name and fame of the brave King Richard."

Hereupon I briefly told the Lady Bride such passages as I knew of mine own story; as mine instruction and breeding in Ely Monastery, mine interview with my father, and his disclosure of my honourable birth, and intended acknowledgment thereof, with his private marriage unto my mother, had he not been prevented by death. I did also note unto her that his fall had been most sad, and his remains treated with cruel despite; and finally besought her to bury her hatred unto him in his tomb, and believe that his offspring was of true heart, and all devoted unto her service.

"In sooth, stranger," answered she, with a milder and calmer air, "in sooth I can almost well believe that thou art the Duke of Gloucester's son, for, albeit I saw him only in mine infancy, and so may remember but little of him myself, yet hath it been told me that he was passing well-spoken, and could glose over foul actions with wondrous fair terms; and thou, too, dost almost make the worse appear the better. His death, as thou sayest, was indeed full sad; yet was it much too good and noble for him, if he were truly the cold, crafty, midnight assassin, which men speak him;—but all is known unto God, and to him is he now gone to make answer!—For thyself I know

nought but what seems fair, and becoming an honest and right good gentleman: yet honourable as thy birth may be, I would never see thee upon the throne supported by the house of York; and I bethink me that it was once reported that Sir Gilbert De Mountford was to bring forth a son of Richard against King Henry."

Unto this I replied that I held no such ambitious or evil thoughts, whatever the proud and giddy blood of youth might once have quickened within me; that Sir Gilbert had long since gone unto his account; and that she might now triumph over the fallen Richard, since her sister was upon his throne, whilst himself and his friends were either outlawed, executed, or slain in battle, the last of them being an obscure soldier, whose life was even then in her power.

The face of the noble damsel, which of late had changed full suddenly from calm and gentle piety unto wrath and sorrow, now resumed again its wonted look, the which I had so long and deeply regarded with delight. "I take unto me shame," said she at length, "that anger should thus have transported me, but the thought of the wrongs and hapless fate of the dear departed companions of mine infancy, do indeed make me sometimes forget, that the faith of Christ teaches us to forgive even our enemies and destroyers. Yet do I trust that the day is fast drawing nigh, when, retired in the calm and holy shades of a convent, consoled and instructed by the good sisters who have there devoted their lives unto God, —mine earthly thoughts and angry passions may sink to rest for ever.—God be gracious unto the

soul of my kinsman Gloucester!—and for thee, kind stranger, albeit I would that thou hadst told me of another father, yet, for thy service towards me, will I think nought but good of thee, and I rejoice that I have cause to remember thee without sin. Farewell! a virgin vowed unto Heaven hath nought but thanks and prayers to bestow, and they are thine already."

The Lady Bride then gave me her hand, which I put unto my lips with much devotion: whereupon, hastily drawing it from me, she wrapped herself more closely in her mantle, and bending her head towards me with much dignity, went forth from the chapel by a private portal; when it seemed as if the even-tide had suddenly sunken down upon me in all its darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

A SECOND INTERVIEW—AN AVOWAL—AND A SEPARATION.

She came!—She is gone!—We have met!
And meet—perhaps never again!
The sun of that moment is set,—
And seems to have risen in vain.

COWPER.

I HAVE afore recounted, that the good brethren of Windsor prayed me to tarry the coming night with them, in those fair stone dwellings which the noble King Edward III. caused to be edified for the Decanus and Canons of the house, in the lower-ward of the castle, and on the eastern side of the cloister adjoining unto the Chapel of St. George. Beneath the same roof, also, as I did afterward find, the Lady Bride was lodged in certain chambers between the Gunner's and Winchester Towers; the windows whereof looked unto the Inner-Bailey and Keep, and overhung divers low wooden houses allotted unto the servitors. The good Decanus and his Canons would fain have passed that joyful season,—being as I said the birthday of King Edward IV.,—in wassail and revelry, and in discoursing of that which I had seen in France and Burgundy; and I might

well hear the merry songs and voices of the lackeys below, which showed that they were doing the like. But beside being now wearied with travel, the thought of that even's converse with the Lady Bride, had shaded over my mind with a grave and holy calmness that made me care little for any such pastime; and seeing, therefore, that mine heart was filled with the cherished remembrance of a scene so sad and sacred, I was all unfit for any other enjoyment. For this cause, therefore, did I soon entreat to go unto my rest, as I did think to travel early upon the coming day.

The chamber wherein I was to lodge was of little space, having a vaulted roof, and a tall narrow window that dimly showed the Chapel-cloister lying in misty moonlight beneath; yet did I take but small note of its incommodity, or the night without, seeing that it contained a pallet whereon I might well rest me, and ponder over the sweet and bitter thoughts of my heart. Upon this couch I therefore threw me, taking off but little of mine attire save mine armour, and lay revolving, as I was wont to do, the scenes of my life that had already passed, and the untried paths through which I had yet to travel. As mine eyes began to grow heavy and to close, and the real images before them were fading into those quaint and dim forms, which they do oft put on as we sink into slumber, my rest was suddenly broken by a loud and continued noise, which seemed to betoken much of present danger; nevertheless, when I looked through the window I could behold nought of hazard in the dark clois-

ter, saving that divers persons were hastily passing about it with torches and loud cries. Howbeit, I might soon hear the shout of "Fire!" and the heavy and hasty toll of the alarum from the Bell-Tower beyond the chapel on the west; and anon a ruddy glow rising upon the night-clouds over the building wherein I was lodging, made me deem that the flames had broken out in its chambers.

I will not now seek to portray the wild disorder of that place, which was in truth greater than I can picture it, or how the inmates of those lodgings came hastily from their chambers, all endeavouring to find safety in escape. For mine own part I made me ready with all speed, and went into the gallery or passage, with the purpose of retreating as the others had done already; yet full desirous of seeking and saving the Lady Bride in that hour of hazard. It was dark without, but as I passed by an open chamber on the other side, I beheld through the window thereof the fire rising up fiercely from beneath, as if it would eftsoons assail that room. The red light was cast upon a female in a white habit, devoutly kneeling before a crucifix, yet sometimes looking silently around her, although with much anxiety and doubt, as to whither she should turn for succour. I felt me well assured that only the Lady Bride would be thus pious and tranquil in a time of such danger; yet without regarding who she might be in that perilous place, I went towards her, and accosting her with little form of speech, raised her in mine arms and hastily bore her forth.

The fearful light which was cast through her window, showed me that it was indeed the Lady Bride whom I now carried, but soon the blaze sank down as if it had been somewhat abated; when she suddenly started from me and hastily withdrew into her chamber. I followed again thither, being anxious to convey her from that place of hazard, and entreated of her to secure her safety by instant flight with me unto some distant part of the building; unto which she did at length consent, and, in the disorder which did then prevail, I led her, unmarked by any, to the stone chambers of the canons on the western side of the cloister.

This was scarcely performed when I heard divers voices, both of men and females, loudly calling to each other to hasten and re-assure the Lady Bride; for that the danger was now past, and, peradventure, had been less great than it was at first deemed. Yet not being wholly satisfied hereof, I hastened the noble maiden as swiftly as her fainting steps would move onward, until we had gotten some good space from that spot of supposed peril, encouraging her on the way thither as I best might. When at length I saw her in safety, I said unto her, "Lady, be of good cheer, all hazard is now past, and I rejoice in having been so nigh unto you as to have borne you therefrom. Yet may I ask if you indeed know me; or are conscious that he who now stands at your side is no other than he who hath so long and deeply adored you?"

"Right well, good Richard, did I know you," answered she, "even when you first appeared in

the gallery, and all else were seeking their own safety; but that courage which delayed you to succour another, forgetful of any evil that might fall upon yourself, assured me that my preserver could be none but he, who formerly so bravely adventured for me and my beloved mother."

"Oh Lady!" answered I thereupon, "much honoured and truly glad do I feel me in this hour, to hear myself, all unworthy as indeed I am, thus lauded by one of your surpassing excellence. This is, in truth, no time for large discourse, nor would I boldly trespass on your courtesy; yet, long as I have reverenced you, and ever as I must adore you, let me say that by thus often bringing us together, may we not mark the hand of God denoting that the course of our life should be the same, and that we were indeed destined for each other?"

"I know not," unto this responded the noble damsel, "that we ought therefore to deem, that what hath been *permitted* by Heaven hath also been *decreed* by it: but of this no more, since such speech is in nowise befitting one to hear who is already a daughter of the church, and will soon be consecrated as a pure virgin unto God."

"Yet, dearest lady," answered I, "forbid me not to feast upon the hope that we are indeed destined for each other's love, being of one house and of equal blood; for those whom God hath so fashioned, although born in climes far distant and parted by strange diversities of condition, yet meet at an appointed place and hour when their affections may best be blended, and are thenceforth 'bound up in the bundle of life' together.

And of such, lady,—deem me not too bold herein, for albeit I am in truth of royal line, I yet venture not to think that I can ever be your equal, —of such would I fain believe are we. Of the same house, and pursued by like storms which have left us orphans in a convulsed world, those very tempests, which did seem only to part us for aye, have yet in truth brought us together without any devices of our own. Say, then, dearest Lady Bride, Oh! say, if we may not well deem, without folly or weakness, that what hath been so marvellously wrought for us is indeed the purpose of heaven, the which we ought reverently to receive and to adore."

"Cease to speak thus, stranger," responded the Lady Bride, "nor pour into the ear of one devoted unto the Lord these words of earthly passion. In sooth I scarcely know what you would utter; yet do I own that all too readily and sinfully have I listened unto your words. I am now, as it were, casting my last look abroad upon the world, and then hastening unto that pious retreat wherein I shall behold it no more."

"But thither," answered I, "you will not now retire, since your noviciate hath not yet passed away: for as we have again met and have been twice thus wondrously brought into communion, Oh! beauteous Lady Bride, fly with me, I beseech you, and let us not part again."

"Entreat me no more," replied the princess, "for to act as your passion would have me, would be but to fly from the embraces of heaven itself! And where, I pray you, should we find safe retreat or means of life? Oh! Plantagenet, if such

be in truth your name, tempt me no longer unto that which hath no issue but in ruin."

"Lady," responded I thereunto, most wondrously impassioned and emboldened, "I give you my faith and troth that I court you not to fly *from* heaven, but *to* it; since heaven is love, and mine I offer you from the inmost chamber of a brave and honest heart. And for an asylum, well I wot to find a sure and fair one with King Charles, of France, since he would fain have kept me in his service when the Dutchess of Burgundy deceased. Think no more, then, upon the cloister but the altar; and look not to become a sister but a bride."

"Forbear, thou kind profane one," returned the lady, "I dare not hear thee farther, lest the very echoes of thy words should hereafter remain upon my heart, to break in upon the holy silence of religion. Cease, then, good friend, to press thy suit upon me, and hold *thy* peace, if indeed thou dost value *mine*."

"Think not so harshly of me," was my answer, "that in any case I would wound thy quiet, or lead thy virtuous heart unto aught but happiness; albeit all the better feelings which heaven hath implanted in man, do bid me urge my prayer to thee. Yet if thou *wilt* withdraw thee from the world, which will henceforth be unto me like a sunless sky,—tell me, I pray thee, in what convent thy young beauties shall be enshrined, that I may bear its name engraven upon my heart, and often make devout pilgrimage unto its blessed walls.

"No, Richard," responded that fair one, "such

may never be; since I retire me from the world, to be free from all its cares and tumultuous passions, and not to drag after me the lusts which I have forsworn for ever. The holy joy and tranquillity which I promise me in that sacred resting-place, is to be won only by giving up the things of time for the bliss of eternity; even as the storm-tossed mariner hopes to win safety on the troubled ocean, when he gladly casts from his barque all her rich lading and brave tackle, so that he may ride over the waves unto his desired haven."

The pious earnestness with which she spake, caused me to feel how well she was fitted to become a sainted inmate of a convent; and yet, although it may in truth seem strange, the more I saw that she would adorn such a holy life, the more did I desire to win her therefrom: upon which I again said, "Nevertheless, lady, might it not be well to remember that He who willed you to be born into this world, gave you unto it as a shining light to call forth His glory? so that to withdraw from it might in truth be but to oppose His will."

"Thy speech, stranger," said the Lady Bride, in a more reserved tone, "is not to honour God, but to flatter his unworthy servant. Think you that heaven cannot show forth its own glory, even from the loneliest retreat of its votaries? or deem you that, because we must sojourn for a while here, we should forget that we are but travelling unto immortality? I ween there is but small reason in this; and as well might he who is clad in the infidel's turban and caftan, when for

some short season he journeys in Palestine, think to wear them for the rest of his days; or as wisely might the merchant, when he hath returned unto his native land, think evermore to speak a foreign tongue. No, Richard! He who hath willed me to live on this earth designed it not for mine home, but as the barque bearing me onward to eternity; and it is for that haven I would even now prepare me."

Never, I trow, did religious votary gaze with more devout admiration upon the shrine of a sainted martyr, than I now did upon the Lady Bride; who thus, even in the very noon-tide of her youth and beauty, was raised far above the thoughts of earth, and in body and spirit devoted unto God. As I thus beheld her with wonder, I took her hand and fervently exclaimed, "Piety like thine, lady, might in truth convert an infidel, and almost turn a Christian to an idolater!"—In doing this, I well believe that such reverent admiration was expressed by mine eyes, that the lovely Bride was assured by them as well as by my tongue, that the boldness which I now used sprang not from idle wantonness or violence. Although methought she somewhat trembled as I held her, yet did she seem to have nought of alarm, and even withdrew not from my touch. Upon this, notwithstanding mine adoration of her piety, I almost unconsciously raised unto my lips the soft hand of beauty which I pressed, and kissed it; yet, though the Lady Bride started thereat, it seemed unto me rather from surprise than anger, so that I was encouraged to repeat it, at the same moment sinking upon one knee.

when most suddenly the Custos of St. George's chapel entered the apartment, followed by divers canons and servitors, and one or two sisters of the order of St. Austin.

In truth I can but ill depict, how the good Christopher Urswicke and his followers started at thus seeing me, as it might seem, wooing the daughter of a king, and a virgin devoted unto the cloister. The red flush of anger rose upon their cheeks, and a dark light seemed to come forth of their eyes, whilst from every tongue the words of wrath came full rapidly and fiercely. "Saints of Heaven!" cried the Custos, "and is it thus the very house and daughter of God are profaned by a foreign stranger! is it thus that a maiden of royal blood,—as the holy 'Vangil saith, '*de domo et familia David*,' one of the very house and line of David,—can forget her high estate and sacred espousals, to listen, in an hour of danger, and even in her father's palace, to the rude homage of a nameless soldier!—Lady," continued he, solemnly shaking his head, "this is not well,—this is not well."

"It is indeed not well, most reverend Decanus," answered I, starting upon my feet, "to deem that the Lady Bride *would* hear, or that I should speak, aught to which angels and men might not alike listen. You call me a nameless soldier, and unto you I may indeed be such; but were my lineage made known, there would not be found a loftier in the broad realm of England! And yet do I esteem it no small honour to have rescued the Lady Bride, when her holy sisters had fled from her, and her servitors were more likely to have fired

her lodging in their brawling cups, than to have saved her from the flames: had *their* aid been at hand, *mine* had been uncalled for."

It was in truth somewhat strange that, speaking at a venture as I now did, I should so exactly guess the cause of that night's brief and sudden alarm; the which did at length prove to have arisen from the carousing lackeys, who had set fire unto those low wooden buildings beneath the Lady Bride's window in the lodgings of the Decanus. As I spake, methought I saw some of the servitors, who seemed hastily to have taken up their weapons, start forward; and in especial one tall stout fellow, in rusty armour, whose face was shaded by his headpiece: howbeit, the spirit of mine ancestors was quick within my veins, and I recked not the number or 'vantage of my foes, but bore me against them with lofty speech and unyielding look. Nevertheless, the boisterous clamour was again renewed; and though it might be that little harm was intended me, yet all menaced; when the Lady Bride, in a resolute though gentle voice, commanded that none should harm me; since I had saved her life with much hazard unto myself, and, for more security, had conducted her unto the cloisters.

"Small danger, I trow, was there, Lady Bride," thereupon answered one of the Austin nuns, "since all the fearful blaze, as the stranger hath well said, came but from some drunken servitors who had fired their lodging, which thou knowest might never have burned the stone chambers above."

"Then small, I trow, sister Maude," returned the

Lady Bride with a gentle quickness of answer, "small, I trow, was the courage wanted to withstand it; albeit certain of my companions *did* fly even from that light danger." But, whilst she spake, her deportment, which was uncommonly mild as the soft gale of even-tide, became so full of dignity and boldness, that they who stood by were at once subdued into silence, as she commanded that I should go forth in the morning without farther question, seeing that I was bearing unto London certain jewels belonging to the late queen her mother. And this her so generous effort on my behalf, did well show unto me that courage, not less than virtue, doth evermore spring in a truly royal bosom, being divinely implanted and brought forth therein by God.

Upon this, however, they no longer flouted me, but gave their best care to the Lady Bride in conveying her unto another lodging; and thus was that fair one and myself again most rudely parted. Yet, as she went forth, she once more looked round unto me, and, as our eyes met, I saw holy resignation in her visage, which admonished me of our duty, though blended, as methought, with somewhat of regret for our separating thus; and she also waved her hand unto me with gratitude and dignity. The ancient Custos then told me, that as I had not scrupled to address a betrothed daughter of the church with unholy words even within the college walls, I might no longer look for harbour or entertainment there, but that I must begone when the castle should first be opened in the morning; unto which he secretly added, "I well believe the princess is most virtuous, and your-

self an honest soldier; though, for your own sake, as a benefactor unto our chapel, I wish you a safe and speedy departure. Keep out of the main road if you may, and go any whither rather than to London for a brief space; and so I commit you unto the keeping of God."

I followed this counsel as closely as I might, travelling a most wearisome journey through wild and cross roads unto Leicester, where I made the Lady Margaret's offering at the church of the Gray-Friars, and added thereunto mine own poor dole for the health of the soul of king Richard; both of the which pious gifts have since been seized upon as spoil by the turbulent son of Harry Tudor, and even my father's sepulchre laid in ruins by his riotous followers. Albeit my road thither was full of hazard, far longer and more wearisome than it would have been to have gone unto London, and thence to Leicester, yet did I beguile it by divers thoughts of the Lady Bride and my converse with her; wherein mine heart did exult, in despite of all the contumely which I had endured. He only, who hath witnessed the sweet smile, and heard the melting voice of peerless beauty, when benignly listening unto a suppliant's suit, he only. I say, *can* imagine unto himself the delight with which I thought over all her words and glances. And even now, too, when time hath shorn away the brown locks of youth and manhood,—now. when the bright blue eyes have become dim and shaded, and mine enfeebled limbs stiff and weak, and my "strong men bow themselves,"—even now doth my breast glow with a fire not its own, when I bethink me of that blissful hour. I was

an unknown and unfriended soldier, beset with manifold hazards;—but what deemed I of poverty or peril, since the Lady Bride's last look and smile were unto me a world of wealth and glory! whilst the only touch of sorrow which I felt, was the fear that in this world I should see her face no more.

CHAPTER V.

THE BUILDING OF A ROYAL MAUSOLEUM, AND A SCENE AT THE PILGRIMS' HOSTEL IN SOUTHWARK.

Then munte I me forth the MINSTER to nowen.
And awaytede a woon, wonderly well ybuilt,
With arches on everich half, and belliche ycorven
With crocketes on corners, with knottés of gold.
Wide windows ywrought, ywritten full thick,
Shinen with shapen shields.———
* * * * *
Though the tax of ten year were truly ygathered
N'olde it maken that house half as I trow.
PIERCE PLOUGHMAN'S CREDE.

Divers men and women will go thus after their own willes, and fyndyng out one pilgrimage.—And if these men and women be a moneth in their pilgrimage, many of them shall be an half-year after great janglers, tale-tellers and lyers.
THE STATE TRIALS.

SOME ten days passed away ere I betook me unto London, to make the Dutchess Margaret's offering at Bermondsey abbey; at the which I did not linger, for that the Lady Bride was no longer dwelling there; and so that fair and stately house seemed unto me like a blank and gloomy void, since all that had given life or light unto its walls was then far distant, either in the royal towers of Windsor, or the shades of some holy convent which was unto me unknown. I made the Lady Margaret's last offering at the abbey of

St. Peter at Westminster; hastening thither with what speed I might, having a full intent to convey me again into France so soon as I should have performed the same, for that all I did regard as dear unto me in England, was now parted from me for ever.

Upon coming forth from the abbey, I went me round unto the eastern end thereof, to behold the foundations of that most stately chapel which Harry Tudor had at this time newly begun there, for the burial place of King Henry VI. as he affirmed, though indeed it was rather for the interment of his own body. Whilst I was looking thereon, an aged and venerable monk, holding a scroll of vellum, and clothed in the black habit of the Benedictine order, drew nigh unto the spot where I was standing, as though he were about to enter within the barriers of the building; and as he fixed his eyes upon me full steadfastly in passing by me, the unwonted custom of my youth suddenly returned unto me, and I accosted him, —albeit I know not why,—with our ancient convent-greeting of "*Benedicite me, Pater,*" which I had learned to address unto mine elders at Ely Monastery. Upon this he gazed at me more earnestly than before, and replied with the common response of "*Fili mi, Dominus sit vobiscum;*" the which seeming unto me like a pleasant gale from the country of my youth, I again answered with "*Et tecum quoque, Reverendissime,*" at the same time making him the courteous *antè* and *retrò* reverence,* which had been taught

* This was a peculiar manner of bowing by the monks, when they entered or left the choir; receiving its name from

me in my boyhood: for, as I knew that churchmen of high estate were ofttimes great and wondrous builders, I knew not of what rank he might be whom I thus saluted, though such reverence should be paid only to an abbot or prior.

Howbeit, he declined with great lowliness the honour which I did thus offer him, saying, "Nay, my son, this salutation belongeth not unto me; for I am not the Lord Abbot of Westminster, for whom, questionless, you do mistake me. Do you seek speech with him?"

"No, in good sooth, father," returned I, "but your voice and words sounded unto me so like what I did ofttimes hear when a youth in St. Mary's monastery at Ely, that I could not choose but answer and bow me as I did."

"A youth, saidst thou, in St. Mary's monastery in Ely?" rejoined the monk, "methought thy visage was not unknown to me, for I also am of that house. Had it not been reported that one Richard Fitz-Richard, who some seventeen years since, was a pupil there,—was slain at the battle of Bosworth,—I should full surely deem that thou wert he."

"And in good sooth I am none other, most venerable father," returned I, "whom, on my part, I take to be the pious and learned Austin, the master of the novices, to whose care I owed

their bending firstly *antè*, or to the altar *before* them, and then *retrò* or *behind*, to the abbot at the bottom of the choir. In making this bow, the back was to be lower than the loins, and the beak than the back, which motion was considered as particularly graceful; the antè and retrò reverence was in general made only to the abbot and prior.

so much in mine early youth; and who would have made me far wiser than I am, had I been but as willing to learn as thou wert to teach."

"Alas! my son," responded the good Father Austin, for it was in truth no other than he, "alas! we be all alike blameworthy therein; seeing that divine wisdom is for ever freely held out unto us, and yet the best of us desire not so full a blessing as the bounty of heaven would pour into our bosoms. How well, therefore, said the wisest of men, '*Sapientia foris prædicat,*' Wisdom discourseth in the streets, and yet do we never regard her."

"I perceive, good father," responded I hereunto, "that you remain unaltered, inasmuch as your every speech is still full of blended charity and instruction; but may I crave of your discretion to tell me how you are employed at this chapel."

"Truly, good Richard," answered the monk, "that will I readily show you; so pass with me within the barriers, and mark well these foundations, on which, '*si Dominus voluerit,*' if the Lord be willing,—as the blessed 'postle James doth well teach us to say in all that we purpose to do hereafter,—there shall be raised so glorious an edifice, that I trow it shall be the marvel of distant generations, and earth shall have nought worthy of being placed beside it."

I did now follow the good monk into the spacious works of that wondrous chapel of our lady at Westminster, which is called by Henry's name, and whereof, at the time I do now write of, the

first stone had been but lately posited: it being done, as a legend thereupon cut did declare in Latin, on Wednesday, the 24th day of January, in this very year 1503, at a quarter before three of the clock in the afternoon. The same was set in its place by Harry Tudor, the Lady Margaret his mother, Abbot John Islip of Westminster, Sir Reginald Bray, and others. Of these last two I would here note that they were both most rare builders; the one having also reared him a chapel in the abbey at Westminster, the which is full thickly studded with devices of his name carved in stone: and for the other, it was he who built a kingdom for Richmond, since he found my Father's coronet on the field of Bosworth; when the Lord Stanley, giving away that which he had no right in, made Harry a king by setting it upon his head.

Nevertheless, this Sir Reginald was a most skilful workman, and is ofttimes said in story to have been the only deviser of the chapel at Westminster, because he was comptroller of the royal works and buildings; but I wot well that Father Austin told and showed me at this time, that the plat of the whole was drawn forth by the pious and learned John Alcock, bishop of Ely, also a master of those works, before his death, the which plat was then given unto the chief masons of that place. They were to edify the same by written indenture with Father William Bolton, the prior of St. Bartholomew's, made master of the works in the forenamed chapel upon the death of Bishop Alcock and Sir Reginald Bray; and by him was it brought unto a fair conclusion some fourteen years

after this.* Howbeit, Father Austin of Ely was mainly aiding herein, for that he had been a near friend of the bishop's, and was also specially skilled in making of stately edifices; and when I had made known unto him what I had seen and learned of that art during my sojourn in Burgundy, he would fain have me as his fellow-workman: so that for awhile I laid aside my soldier's habit, and became a builder at Westminster, lodging with mine old tutor in the *Dormitorium* with the monks thereof.

Whiles that I am speaking of this part of my former years, I would note, that in very truth I never in my life saw aught so brave and glorious, so holy and grave a structure, as this chapel of

*The persons mentioned above have both been esteemed as the architects of King Henry the seventh's chapel at Westminster, especially the latter, as Bishop Alcock died Oct. 1st, 1500,—though he is thought entirely to have completed the design before his death,—and Sir Reginald Bray in Oct. 1503. They have been thus considered, because they both held the office noticed in the text; but in the description of the royal tomb, contained in the will of Henry VII., the prior of St. Bartholomew's is called "master of the king's works in that chapel," and to him were delivered "the plat" for the building, signed by Henry himself, with pictures of the images, arms, and badges, for the painted glass of the windows. This ecclesiastic was William Boulton, who received the temporalities of his office Aug. 27th, 1505, the 21st year of Henry VII., and he continued prior until his death in 1532. He is recorded to have been a great builder, who repaired the priory and parish churches of St. Bartholomew, with the lodgings and offices of his own house, and to have erected a new manor-house at Canonbury by Islington. &c. Speed's statement, that Bishop Fox was concerned in the design of the king's chapel, has been already referred to in a former note.

Henry Tudor. He lived not to see it orderly finished, albeit ere he deceased* it was covered in with that most wondrous fretted vaulting, which looketh as it had been made of woven wands changed into stone. Around the chapel were many fair glass windows, shining with sacred stories and devices of armory, rarely wrought upon them in rich colours; and divers fair altars were set up in several parts of the building, the which were well provided of costly vessels and furniture. But I trow that the richest sight of all, was Henry's own tomb in the midst, before the high-altar; it being of black touchstone garnished in the choicest wise with many sculptures, pillars, and figures, of brass and copper overlaid with gold, wrought by the skill and cunning of one Peter Torrysany† of the city of Florence, painter. Upon that tomb lay the effigies of Henry Tudor and the good Queen Elizabeth, as great as the life, in copper gilt; and at the four corners thereof sat winged boys bearing divers emblems, and his banner and device of the dragon. And about the whole sepulchre was there ordained a wondrous

* Henry VII. died at Richmond, on Sunday, April 21st, 1509.

† Pietro Torregiano, the celebrated Sculptor and contemporary of Michel-Angelo Buonarotti. Several of the original indentures or covenants for his works for the Tomb of Henry VII. are yet extant, which curiously illustrate the progress of the cemetery; that for the metal screen round the monument is dated October, 1512, and in 1516 another agreement appears for erecting a rich canopy and altar within the chapel, to be finished by November 1st, 1519. which probably indicates the time of the completion of the whole edifice.

stately 'closure of pierced brass in manner of a chapel, cast by the same skilful Florentine; and at the foot of the said tomb within, was an altar, having chantry-priests to say mass thereat for the soul of him who was sepultured beneath.

This, I say, was some part of the glory of that wondrous chapel, when that it was finished; to behold the which so perfected, hath been one of the very few causes of my coming forth from the retired solitude of mine old age. And, as I do now remember me, I saw it upon the obit, or anniversary of the death of Harry Tudor, in the year of Christ 1520; by the which time mine angry passions against him were so much allayed, that even I could speak my *Requiescat* over his tomb with the others. But surely no shrine of holy confessor, spotless virgin, or triumphant martyr, ever shone so resplendently as did his chapel at Westminster at that season. The high-altar there was decked with a mighty cross of wood plated over with gold, and a grand effigy of the Virgin adorned with jewels: but within Harry's own sepulchre, I set down no fable when I say that there were an hundred large waxen tapers, standing about his hearse, that was garnished with banners, and pensils, and escutcheons, of fine gold. The brazen 'closure of the tomb, too, was all girt about with that solemn and stately band of black velvet, two feet broad, called by the French *Le Litre*, but with us in England, the Funeral Belt; which is proper unto great lords and sovereign princes, who have been

founders and patrons of churches.* At the altar, which stood within Harry Tudor's sepulchre, all the furniture was shining with gold, and the hangings thereof were of black cloth-of-gold; the same being full richly set forth with a great piece of the holy cross, encased also in fine gold adorned with gems, and one of the legs of the valiant martyr St. George, brought from Milan in Italy, set in silver and partly gilt. On every side, too, I wot, there might be seen marbles of divers colours, pillars of gilded copper, and imperial crowns and arms; with certain fine images, wondrously wrought in baken earth, portraying the histories of the nativity and resurrection of Our Lord, angels kneeling with emblems of his passion, and his effigy as taken dead from the cross, painted in so marvellous a manner as to look like very nature.

But albeit I may not in this little tome declare one half part of the resplendent glories of that burial-place, I may not forget to note that there was brought unto it from the shrine of St. Edward the king and confessor,—that image which Henry Tudor ordained to be made of himself in his last will. It was choicely sculptured in wood, being wrought with plate of fine gold in manner of an armed man, having his coat-armour enamel-

* This very ancient and extraordinary symbol of funeral pomp, was used principally in France, and was generally ornamented with the arms of the deceased, and tears, skulls, and other emblems of death. The riband, or belt used for sovereigns was commonly of black silk, and that for nobles always of cloth; it frequently passed entirely round the church, chapel, or burial-place, as well without as within.

led thereon, kneeling upon a table of silver and gilt, and holding the crown, which,—as Henry's Testament full cunningly saith,—"it pleased God to give us, with the victory of our enemy at our first field." Truly I wot, that if he never spake truth before touching his claim unto the throne of this realm, herein he did it; inferring unto posterity that it was by right of conquest, by his own sword and his own bow; and neither by the questionless title of the good Queen Elizabeth, nor the call and consent of the nation.*

But now to leave speaking of this, and return again unto mine own story, I had not been occudied in the building of Harry Tudor's Chapel at Westminster past two years, when, a little before Lent in 1505, the pious Father Austin sickened and died in the *Dormitorium* of the monastery there. His ending was full calm, and altogether such as became a Christian man; yet did he tell me that one thing lay full heavy upon his conscience: the which was, that whereas he had purposed and vowed, on his first coming unto London, to make a devout pilgrimage unto the

* Henry's claim to the crown by *descent* was utterly without foundation, resting only upon the title of his mother Margaret, daughter and heiress of John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset; who was the son of John Beaufort, the eldest son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and fourth son of Edward III. The Duke, however, had this son and other issue by Catherine Swinford, not only before his marriage with her, but also in the life-time of Constance of Castile, his second wife; and though, in 1396, he procured an Act of Parliament by which they were made legitimate, a special exception was inserted of their thence deriving any right to the royal dignity.

shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury,—he had been letted and prevented thereof by aiding the Bishop of Ely in plotting out and founding Henry's Chapel. "Therefore," said he, "good Richard, my dear son in Christ, I pray you that you will undertake this travel for me, and it shall peradventure be of special good unto us both. I trow that I have often wished to behold the king's most stately chapel completed, because I do well ween that the earth shall scarcely have its fellow; but such was not the will of God, and to Him I gladly go hence, far from the building of this temple unto a better: '*Domum*,'—as the blessed 'Postle Powle well calleth the many-mansioned house of the Father of our Lord,—'*Domum non manufactum, eternam in cœlis*;' house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

And with these, and the like Christian aspirations, went he unto his rest; and as soon as I might after his burial, in the second week in Lent,* what time pilgrims do commonly journey unto Canterbury, I joined me unto a party then presently travelling thither, and lodging at the ancient and famous Tabard hostel in Southwark. We set forth about the hour of *Prime* on a fair fresh morning, being Tuesday, the 18th day of February, purposing to spend a month on our pilgrimage, and to return again unto London towards the feast of Easter.

Thus, therefore, did I behold the renowned shrine of St. Thomas ere the late boisterous son

* In the year 1505, Ash-Wednesday fell upon February 7th, and Easter Sunday on March 23d.

of Harry Tudor had despoiled it, and even blotted the name of the Archbishop from the calendars and service-books of the church; and well I wot that there were few sepulchres more resplendent than that wherein the remains of his body rested, unto the which it was transferred by the wise cardinal Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. The said shrine stood upon high, covered by a carved wooden box, which was drawn up by cords, and disclosed unto our view a tomb, whereof the basest part was of massive gold, for every thing around it sparkled and shined with very large and rare jewels. Then did the Prior recount unto us the names of their several donors, touching each with a white wand, and telling the name and price of the gem; and in truth most of them were the gifts of sovereign princes. But I beheld also what the monks of Canterbury feign, as I think, to esteem much beyond these riches, namely, the reliques of St. Thomas: such as his leg, like a long thin reed, plated over with silver; his whole face set in gold and jewels; and his coarse gown and sudarium, yet covered with the stain of his blood. There were, likewise, in this most ancient church many other sights of great pomp and glory, which have since been despoiled and ruined, when that the late Henry's visiters plundered the riches of Canterbury; being the blessed Virgin's shrine in the vaults beneath, and the vast pomp of vestments and golden furniture in the *Vestiaria*. Nevertheless, I noted in one place, a little wooden altar unto the holy Mary, which is reported to be very ancient, and in truth it might have belonged unto the church

when her pastors could declare "silver and gold have we none," albeit they had the greater wealth of saying unto such as were sick, "Arise and walk!"—And of late years, in my retreat from the world, I have pondered much and earnestly upon men's costly and almost boundless building, beautifying, and enriching churches; and, peradventure, my thoughts do somewhat differ from those that I had at the time whereof I now write. Some, I trow, do it for fame after their deaths; others, to make restitution of ill-gotten riches: and, questionless, some out of pure devotion unto God and his service; yet cannot I but think that such great wealth hath been the main cause of the vicious lives and pride of the late monks of England. It is full hard to keep a holy course with an abundance of this world's goods, or to carry a flowing cup without spilling; but I nevertheless deem it sacrilegious plunder to seize, as the second Harry Tudor hath of late done, upon the possessions of the churches and monasteries, and confiscate them unto himself, depriving their priests and brethren of their support and shelter, because they were so hapless as to have riches. Certes, in all churches and religious houses, I would have the vestments and vessels grave and stately, fitted unto the holy service and the sovereignty of God: but to what purpose is it that men do spend all their substance upon golden fonts and candlesticks, images and organs, rare sculptures and 'broidered hangings for our earthly temples, when so many of our brethren and sisters of mankind,—Christ's living temples,—be ready to perish with hunger and thirst?

Howbeit, it was of the glories of these things

that the company of pilgrims did most speak, what time we returned unto the Tabard hostel in Southwark some ten days before Easter, and were taking a parting supper together with our host. All men do well know that broad and spacious inn, with its wide gate-way opening unto the street, and the great court within, and galleries of lodging-rooms round about it; and it seemeth that almost all men repair unto it, for, beside the party with which I had now returned, there were divers going unto Canterbury against Easter, or travelling from other shrines back into the south parts of the realm. All these were full of talking and vain disputations as to the marvels they had seen, and the holiness of the shrines whereto they had travelled; some affirming that St. Thomas passed all beside, and others that our Lady of Walsingham was without peer. Divers, moreover, had brought back with them little else than the disports which be strangely, though full commonly, used in such journeys, as the merry tunes, the lewd songs, and the wild tales that they had heard therein. For some pilgrims do carry pipers with them, so that every town they ride through, what with the noise of their singing and the sound of their piping, the ringing of those bells which be given them as tokens at Canterbury, and the barking of dogs after their train,—they make as great outcry as if the king rode by with all his clarions and minstrels.* But, natheless, there were some of that

* When these very indecorous practices were objected to Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, he defended

company at the Tabard, whose religious zeal was truly quickened by hearing of the acts, and seeing of the reliques of God's saints and martyrs, or looking upon his most ancient and holy churches: the which, perchance, is most of the good that is to be found in pilgrimage.

But I trow others did contrariwise think their travel to have been enow to blot out a whole life of guilt, and even to be a license under which they might commit new crimes; and of this sort seemed unto me a rustic-looking man, whose fierce visage was covered with red hair, and whose coarse habit showed him to be of low degree and breeding. He had joined our company a little space out of Canterbury, albeit I had not noted him until we got unto the Tabard; when I found him to be a free and bold knave, though wondrously well-spoken after his blunt fashion. Then did he tell us all that he sought to take service with Lord John de Marlow, the prior of Bermondsey, in his grange or elsewhere, for that now the land was at peace there was no more want of soldiers. "Howbeit, my masters," added he, "as your roving lance-man would make but a sorry son of the church without clean shriving, I have now made me the two great pilgrimages unto our Lady of Walsingham and St. Thomas of Canterbury, and trow that I'm as meek as a maiden, and pure as the new-born infant."

Then, as I have said, divers of our company

them by saying that pipers and singers went with pilgrims, that when those who travelled barefoot struck their feet against a stone and made them bleed,—they should begin a song, or play away their hurt by a tune on the bagpipes.

did familiarly speak of the marvels which they had seen in their several journeys; and such as had been afore-time in foreign parts, did tell of many holy things of great wonder which be yet kept therein. Thus, one spake of the coat of our Lord at Constantinople, the same being without seams and called "*tunica inconsumpta*," together with the cross of the good thief Dymas. Another told of the most ancient City of Cologne, where he beheld the uncorrupted bodies of the three blessed kings, who followed the wondrous star unto Bethlehem of Judea; whilst a third one did affirm that he had been in Geneway, and had there looked upon the *Saint-Graal* or holy vessel, marvellously made of a fair and single emerald; wherefrom men do say that our Lord did eat of the last passover-lamb at Paske-tide!* But the rustic person whom I spake of afore, told us another sort of histories for his share of the disport, touching that which he had seen in his pilgrimage unto Walsingham. Such I trow was his strange report of "the Good Sword of Winfarthing,"† in Norfolk,

* This supposed relique, which forms so very prominent a feature in the romance of King Arthur, being an object of search to all the Knights of the Round-Table,—appeared in Genoa first in 1101, having been found at the capture of Cæsarea, and presented by Baldwin, King of Jerusalem. It remained at Genoa until it was removed, with other spoil, to the Imperial Library at Paris, in November 1806, when it was found to be only of fine green glass, though probably of ancient manufacture; it is hexangular in shape, and measures twelve French inches in diameter and three in height.

It was originally supposed to have the gift of working miracles, and especially of curing deseases.

† This singular relique is also affirmed to have had the power of assisting such females as lighted a taper before it

which would recover the strayed or stolen horses of them that lighted unto it a taper and sought its aid; unto the which he added another marvel in yet these words in this rude, though wondrous ballad that followeth.

The Wicket of Walsingham.

Of England and her ancient Knights doth many a minstrel tell,
And their mighty deeds of daring do their lays and legends swell,
And the marvels they beheld of old are sung both wide and far,
With their noble faith in love, and their gallantry in war;
But I ween a better tale was never told in camp or court,
Than the Wicket-gate of Walsingham and Ralph De Botetourt.

A braver soldier never braced a cuirass to his breast,
A taller champion never raised in tilt or field his crest,
A stouter wight a stronger barb across did never stride,
And he rear'd himself full loftily when forth he 'gan to ride:
And broad and high must spread the gate of barbican or fort,
Wherein might pass the mounted knight, Sir Ralph De Botetourt.

To Walsingham in wildest speed he comes in arms array'd,
His mail-shirt rent with battle-strokes, with blood upon his blade,
And a vengeful host behind him spurring on in hot career,
He swiftly rides, yet cheek and eye are all unchanged by fear:
Though well I ween their hasty course is not in mirth or sport,
Or that little hazard put to flight Sir Ralph De Botetourt.

every Sunday in the year, by shortening the lives of their spouses. It is nevertheless, said that it was originally the sword of a robber who had taken sanctuary in the churchyard, and escaping thence, left it behind him; when, after having lain several years in an old chest, the parson and clerk converted it into a relique with considerable success.

He speeds him to the Sanctuary that lies before him straight,
But how may flight avail him aught at yonder narrow gate,
That scarcely spreads an ell in height, or a yard in space between,
When full ten feet that mounted knight and war-horse stand I ween?
His foemen deem his blood to spill at the abbey's lowly port.
"Now Christ protect thee from their swords! Sir Ralph De Botetourt."

"Oh haste thee on, my barb!" he cries, "slack not thy swift career,
To save thy fainting master's life from the vengeful foeman's spear;
It is not from an equal strife, nor the battle-field's array
That I call thee with a coward speed to bear me hence to-day.
But a lurking host assails me now of fierce and foul report,
Yet some have felt the blade, I trow, of Ralph De Botetourt."

A fervent and a silent vow he made within his breast,
He breathed a soldier's hasty prayer as on his barb he press'd:
Then cheer'd once more his gallant steed, with steadfast heart and faith,
That the Virgin would be with him still, in safe retreat or death:
To Her and to Her Son alone now look'd he for support,
Since vain were flight and valour both to Ralph de Botetourt.

A sudden bound the charger makes,—the foe is on his flanks,
With pointed spears and ready blades uplifted in their ranks!
And—Holy Saints!—the low arch spreads!—the Knight is safe within!
And without his wond'ring enemies stand baffled in their sin!
The good Sir Ralph rejoiced him then, for mortal wight had ne'er
A greater miracle to aid in hour of his despair;
He graved his image on the gate of that most blessed court.
And so, God rest the pious Knight, Sir Ralph de Botetourt!

As this ballad was brought unto an end, an aged and reverend Palmer, who was of our company, said, "Lordings all, I well ween that this is a full true story; howbeit, there seemeth unto me to be some pious mystery hidden therein. For the knight and his foemen may well prefigure man pursued by the fiend, against whom he cannot stand; and so flieth he for refuge unto God, who is shadowed forth by His earthly church. But, in his unsanctified condition, man is as it were a giant in his sins, who cannot enter at that portal which Our Lord calleth '*Porta angusta et via arcta quæ ducit ad vitam*,' the strait gate and narrow way which doth lead unto life. Wherefore, being pressed hard by his enemy, the fugitive calleth upon God, and voweth himself as a holy offering unto his Son, and lo! the gate of Heaven at last spreads itself to receive him into an invincible sanctuary, against which both men and demons may strive in vain."

"A most goodly morality truly!" hereupon exclaimed another of our company; "who might have deemed, now, that such wisdom lurked in that old story? I trow that I've oft-times heard it told and sung, and looked on the brazen image of the knight at Walsingham, and many other goodly sights there, albeit I never yet thought a word of the mystery thereof. And speaking of goodly sights, my masters, I trow that one of the fairest that can be looked upon, will be when the bishop of Winchester shall sing the high-mass at Bermondsey Abbey at Easter, and give the veil unto certain noble ladies who were wont to dwell there, for the more honour to that house: and men

say that one of them is the sister of the late King Edward and Queen Elizabeth, the Lady Bride Plantagenet, who is even now lodging there."

At that beloved name it is no marvel if I started, as in truth I did, inwardly resolving to be present at her consecration, and even devising how I might behold her before that rite should part her from me for ever. But suppressing my present transports for awhile, that I might get more knowledge herein, I questioned him who had last spoken, with what calmness I could, if, peradventure, he knew in what part of the abbey the Lady Bride was lodging.

"Ay, marry," answered he, "for I dwell not far distant, and I have often marked her lamp in her chamber in the abbot's house, overlooking his fair garden and maze. I wot, moreover, that she ever walks forth on that green-sward to chant her hymns at even-tide."

Hereupon I did inquire no farther, but hastily quitted the table at the hostel with an anxious heart, and walked forth into the highway of Southwark to consider how I might best shape my future course. It was a clear and fresh spring even, and the young moon was riding high in the heavens, and it seemed unto me near the fitting hour to adventure what I had thus hastily thought on; for that in the broad daylight I might not hope to seek an interview with a professed virgin at the abbey of Bermondsey. Whilst I thus pondered, my footsteps all unwittingly wandered thither, but when I had thus arrived there I knew not at first how to effect mine intent, and I roved around the abbey like one crazed with moody madness: yet

finding neither cunning to proceed nor resolution to withdraw. It might be that I passed nearly an hour of perplexed and lonely musing, often looking toward the Lady Bride's window, when I bethought me that, as it was near the time of *Complin*, when the brethren would be at prayers, perchance I might be able to mount the wall of the abbey-garden, and meet with her in that even walk whereof the guest at the Tabard had told me. But upon looking at the lofty boundaries which girdled in that ancient house, I almost gave up the enterprise in despair, until I noted that on the north side, where the church of St. Mary Magdalen joined unto the abbey-wall, the same was greatly decayed and fallen away; perchance because some of the abbots, coveting rather to fill their own purses than to keep up the fence of God's fold, had let the stone boundary sink into ruin. And here I saw, that although it might prove no easy matter to scale it from within, yet might I with small labour surmount the wall from without; since, by reason of the manifold burials there, the earth of the graves and dust of the mouldering bodies had much raised the ground; and, farther, a table-tomb unto the memory of Master Geoffry Gresham, the far-famed Fletcher, had been reared by that part of the wall which was most decayed. Upon this tomb lay the rare effigy of the rich Fletcher, with his stanch hound carved at his feet, and by these I saw that I could easily mount and lower myself on the other side, by making a cord fast round the dog's head or elsewhere as I listed; ascending again unto the churchyard when I had seen the damsel, or when danger approached to bid me escape.

I saw in this device such hope of success, that I did at once determine to provide me with a ladder of cord,—which I might easily get me in Southwark,—because, the good hour was now wearing fast away. When I returned unto Bermondsey, the bell had already tolled the hour of seven, the service of *Complin* was being sung, and the brethren were all in their church; I did therefore presently take forth my cords, which were knotted together like the shrouds of a vessel, and, making them fast unto the tomb, ascended thereon, and committed myself unto Providence. Having, as I have before noted, already been at this abbey, I well knew that the left-hand walk, south of the church, would lead me unto the Prior's maze, being a grove of lilacs and overhanging laburnum-trees, which was wont to be the Lady Bride's walk at even; wherein I might well secure me from all notice. And so mounted I the wall with cautious and silent movements, and seeing none within to oppose my passage, I forthwith descended into that tranquil spot, which, as it were, lay sleeping before me, in all the calm beauty of a spring-tide moonlight.

CHAPTER VI.

A NIGHT-ADVENTURE AT BERMONDSEY ABBEY BEFORE ITS DISSOLUTION.

I'll tell thee, by my faithen
That sometimes I have known
A fair and goodly Abbey
Stand here of brick and stone;
And many a holy friar,
As I may say to thee,
Within these goodly cloisters
I did full often see.

BALLAD OF PLAIN TRUTH AND BLIND IGNORANCE.

It were a world to tell what then I thought,
What joy I saw, what pleased my listening ear.
What hand I held that free consent had brought,
What haste I had that constant truth did bear:
* * * * * * *
But lo! Alas! they were but shadow'd shows,
For, when I woke, my summer sun was gone;
My wonted clouds within my head arose
And, storming, straight thus 'gan I make my moan:
"Ah! Goddés good! why do I live again,
To lose my joy, and find my former pain?"

THE GARDEN-PLOT, BY HENRY GOLDINGHAM.

WHEN I thus found me alone within the gardens of Bermondsey Abbey, my soul became filled with a pious and solemn feeling well befitting that holy place, though blent with doubts and hopes touching my present enterprise. These did keep me for some brief space, riveted, as it were, unto the spot whereon I stood, and intently gazing

upon the scene around me; so that I do well remember how looked that abbey, ere it was resigned by its coward abbot unto the second Harry Tudor,* who seized upon many a fair heritage with which good men of old had endowed the church, and gave unto others that which was in truth not his own. They who now behold this place, I wot shall see but little of what I have here noted; because the most part of those fair buildings which were once devoted unto the service of God, have been thrown down, and the very stones thereof used to set up a vain-glorious dwelling-place for man.

But I will now essay to picture it, as I beheld it nearly fifty years past, before its candlestick was moved out of its place. I have afore said that the young moon shone brightly over grange and greensward, lighting and gilding refectory and hall, church and dormitory with its lustre: for upon my right hand spread out the abbot's curious maze and fair garden, with the long trim alleys and winding walks thereof. Before me arose his

* It has been supposed that Robert Wharton, or Parfew, the last abbot of Bermondsey, and successor to John de Marlow, mentioned in the above narrative, was actually put into that office by the court, that he might surrender the abbey and its revenues to the crown. This he did by a voluntary instrument of resignation, dated January 1st, in the 29th year of Henry VIII., 1538, anticipating the Act for suppressing the greater Religious Houses, which passed July 29th in the next year. The abbot had been made bishop of St. Asaph in June, 1536, and on his surrender received a pension of 500 marks, 333*l*. 6*s*. 8*d*. Bermondsey Abbey was granted in 1541 to Sir Robert Southwell, Master of the Rolls, who sold it to Sir Thomas Pope in the same year, by whom the ancient conventual buildings were taken down, and a mansion erected with the materials as referred to in the text.

stately stone lodgings, standing in the great base-court: and behind me was the abbey-church, the windows whereof were shining with the light within, whilst the swell of the organ and slow psalm of the monks, came ever and anon upon the fresh gale of even as it passed me by. On mine other hand stood the great north gate, and the dwellings and offices of the brethren; and far out upon the south, I might discern the warren, grange, and pasture-fields of the abbot.

Having thus for a brief space gazed around me, almost lost in thought, I did next turn me unto the little grove of which the pilgrim had spoken, and, forcing aside the leaves and branches thereof, presently so concealed myself in its bower, that I was assured that none, who should not part the trees as I had done, might perceive that a stranger was there hidden. The same holy silence seemed to reign around that spot, yet was not mine own breast without somewhat of disquiet, since I felt that my present act was one which I might not openly avow; for though I purposed nought but good in again seeking to behold the Lady Bride, yet did I question with myself whether I were not sinful in thus covertly approaching a spot which was consecrated unto the service of God. Nevertheless, these thoughts were full soon put to flight, by doubts and fears that peradventure I had outstaid the Lady Bride's hour, and so should not behold her even now that I was within the walls of the very place of her sojourn. But as the moon went down the sky, and the light passed away, the rising gale swept along the leaves which formed my bower, and

brought with it strains of sweet and holy music. At first methought it was only the choral swell of the monks in their abbey, but anon I knew the voice, and found it to be in the garden itself; and these were the words which came unto mine hearing.

EVENING HYMN OF THE LADY BRIDE PLANTAGENET.

Before the closing of the light
God of our life, we cry to Thee,
That through the darkness of the night
Thy wonted care may round us be;
And that Thy mercy, great and free,
May keep all evil sprites away,
Until the dawning of the day.
Domine, clamo ad Te,
Domine, exaudi me!

The visions of the midnight hour
Do Thou from sin all holy keep,
That no foul dreams nor phantom's power
May stain our souls, or fright our sleep;
But chain them in the fiery deep,
That neither night nor noon may find
The demon's spells within ourmind
Domine, clamo ad Te,
Domine, exaudi me!

Thus, ever prove our hope and stay,
Our shield when danger doth affright;
Our pillar of the cloud by day,
Our fiery column through the night;
Until we reach Thy realm of light,
Where our glad souls shall ever be
Glorious and safe,—because with Thee!
Domine, ad Te clamamus,
Et in seculum laudamus!

The sound of this music was so sweet unto me,

that neither by speech nor movement, and scarcely by breathing, did I interrupt the harmony; and even when all was hushed I still continued to listen. Howbeit, anon I heard approaching feet, and two females drew nigh unto my hiding-place, one of whom mine anxious eyes soon discovered to be the Lady Bride; and the other methought I remembered as one of those Austin nuns whom I had seen with her at Windsor, and who seemed to be counselling her as to the holy duties whereon she should soon enter for life. "And furthermore, dear sister," I might well hear her say, "when that ye retire unto your bed, bless you with the sign of the cross, committing your soul and body unto your spouse Christ, and the keeping of your good angel. Then lay you down reverently with your arms crossed upon your breast, being diligently aware of vain thoughts, and quickly putting away of vain temptations; and, if you may not sleep, then occupy yourself with prayers or with your rosary, because your adversary the fiend never sleepeth."

I now noted that the Lady Bride did desire of her companion, to leave her awhile unto her own meditations in that fair and lonely spot; for that she would ponder over the rule whereto she was to be consecrated. "And herein do I much commend you, sister Bride," responded the nun, "for it is profitable and ghostly lore to think much upon our rule of life, with the exposition thereof by the holy Abbot Hugh, of St. Victoire. Ever live up unto it, I pray you, keep it, read it, know it by heart and practice, declare, teach, and openly show it: that so you may reck not who sees or

marks it, and be afraid of nought, *that* being duly held and performed. Benedicite, sister, tarry not long in the garden, and so I commit you unto God."

The nun then presently left the noble novice, and I heard a door close after her departure, whereupon I could scarcely believe mine own good fortune, in thus having so speedily the chance which I had doubtfully hoped for: and yet when the Lady Bride next drew near me in her pious musings, I feared to present myself unto her on the sudden, lest I should alarm her; or, peradventure, be exposed unto the view of some watcher. Howbeit, as the time was now hastily wearing, whilst she was turned from me I left the bower, and, having looked around to see if any were near, and being satisfied that none were present beside that fair damsel and myself, I cautiously went towards her and addressed her with much lowliness of speech. Nevertheless, full great was her amaze at the sight of me and sound of my voice, as she demanded, with almost breathless haste, why I had so ventured unto her who had now no part in the world; conjuring me forthwith to save myself by flight.

"Think not of my safety, lady," answered I, "since it is all too unworthy to deserve the care of one so noble and pious as yourself. Yet did I desire to behold you once more ere you depart from the world, to assure you of mine entire devotion, and to say that if even by the sacrifice of my life I can serve you, it will be indeed a happiness unto me to lay it down."

"I doubt not of your devotion, kind friend, re-

plied the noble novice, "since I have proved it too often to make question thereof; but remember that I have nothing now either to hope or fear in this world, and, therefore, the looser be my ties unto it the more easily will they be severed. If, then, thou comest hither only to express thy good will unto me, believe that I know and feel it, peradventure more than I ought: take my thanks, then, and depart, for, credit me, thy danger is great shouldest thou be discovered."

I now explained unto the Lady Bride, how that I had heard by chance of her being presently at Bermondsey, the which had made me resolve to see her, if it might be effected, and take mine eternal farewell of her: adding thereto, albeit with presumptuous speech, that I feared no dangers, since in such an enterprise I would almost have braved the wrath of heaven itself!

"May God pardon us both! Richard," returned the noble damsel, looking upwards, "and for thy bold words, it seemeth as if the wrath of heaven, whereof thou speakest so lightly, were eftsoons about to fall upon us. Behold how fiercely the moon hath sunken, and the skies are overclouded; surely we are sinning, and I most so: therefore depart, Plantagenent, whilst yet you may with safety."

And even as she spake, I could not but note that the heavens grew darker and wondrously disturbed by the rising storm, yet from this I felt no terror; for that I deemed not myself or mine adventure in that place had called it forth as a sign of vengeance from on high. I therefore said unto her, "Lady, believe not that this tempest

cometh upon us in anger, but think rather that it depicteth the gloom in mine heart and the wild tumult in my breast, at being thus parted from you for ever." I did also entreat her not to fear for mine easy escape thence, telling her of the means by which I had entered the abbey-garden, and adding thereunto mine earnest desire that she would depart with me by the same course; for that we were of the very last of the houses of York and Plantagenet, and 'twere pity that such noble names should ever die.

"Truly," responded the royal bride, "if thou art indeed the Duke of Gloucester's son, thou art the last man of thy name; for my hapless cousin Edward hath already fallen on the scaffold, though his sister Margaret yet lingereth on a doubtful life.* Yet if we *be* the last of our lineage, let us not tarnish its lustre by an act which is dishonourable and unlawful; and such I ween would be to fly with thee, from the holy profession which I have made unto heaven."

* Edward Plantagenent, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury, eldest son and heir of George, Duke of Clarence, was confined by his uncle, Richard III., in Sheriff-Hutton Castle. Yorkshire; but on the accession of Henry VII. was removed to the Tower, being then fifteen years old, and more closely confined, because he was supposed to be the only male Plantagenet then living. Having attempted to escape with Perkin Warbeck, he was arraigned of high-treason, being charged with attempting to rescue that adventurer and make him king; when, having been induced by a promise of security, to confess that with which he was wholly unacquainted, he was condemned and beheaded on Tower Hill, November 28th, 1499. Margaret Plantagenet, his sister, survived till May 27th, 1541, when she also was decapitated, though without arraignment or trial.

As she spake thus, I had gently drawn her towards the place whereat I had entered, to assure her of my safety and the means of conveying her thence; by showing her the ladder of cord hanging upon the wall, for I doubted not that it would be still there. But, lo! it was now nowhere to be seen, and notwithstanding I searched all around I looked for it in vain. I was much dismayed hereat, albeit I sought, as I best might, to hide my loss from the gentle Lady Bride; yet did she quickly note the cause of my perplexity, and said, in a voice of tender sorrow, that she deemed my sanguine hopes had trusted unto unequal means of escape, and that now my danger was all too certain. "Dearest lady," replied I, hereupon greatly encouraged by the anxiety which she had shown for me, "dearest lady, fear not; but even should I be taken in this adventure, in what better cause than yours can I lay down my life? This is unto me an hour of deepest interest, as was that in the Canons' chamber at Windsor, and I will again use all sincerity in my speech, and say, Lady Bride, how fervently I love you. Believe me, if the lightning-flashes, now darting from yonder cloud, could shine into my breast, you would behold in it a heart, which, from the first time I heard your blessed name, hath never ceased to beat for you with the liveliest devotion; and whilst life is given unto it, I swear by my part in the bliss of eternity that it shall beat for no other!"

"I can well think thee faithful, Richard," responded the Lady Bride, "yet say it not unto *me*, I pray thee, since it is now all unmeet for me to speak of earthly love; albeit if mortal excellence

could win mine heart, thy generous passion for me would assuredly do it. But this may not be, therefore take back thy promise, and give thy vows unto those who live for this world, since I am all devoted unto another."

There was in her demeanour, as it seemed, a settled purpose which well attested her sincerity; yet, as I sighed despondingly at her words, methought she appeared touched by my sorrow, although I dare not say that she shared it: like as a pitying angel mourneth over the weakness of humanity, even whilst his heavenly nature keepeth it from his own breast. The noble Bride did moreover give farther proof of her benevolence towards me, by drawing from her hand a ring with a rich gem, bearing for its impress the sign of the holy cross; and, giving it unto me, bade me, with consoling speech, to wear it, not for her sake, but for the sake of him whose sign was graven upon it. I received her gift with much rapture, and I trow never did I so deeply lament my narrow fortune, as I did in bethinking me that I had nought to give unto her in return. Howbeit, I remembered that in my bosom I had a little book of offices, partly written and illumined by mine own hand, fairly bound in red velvet 'broidered with gold, and this I hastily took forth, and besought the Lady Bride to receive the same at my hands, as a pledge that, for her sake, I did abjure all thought of wedlock; adding that I would ever wear her ring when I should be seen of woman, that so I might be known of all as a betrothed-one.

"Betrothed, indeed!" responded the royal no-

vice, "not unto me, but unto God as I well trust; for his am I, and the best wish of my heart for thee is that thou wert the same!"

She could say no more, for now divers lights, beside those which flashed from the stormy skies, came forth from all parts of the building and filled the garden, whilst loud and angry voices on every side declared that a stranger had entered its holy precincts; the which at once showed unto me that discovery had taken place, albeit I knew not how, and that escape was now impossible. Howbeit I manned myself to meet them as I best might; but the Lady Bride, overcome at once by fear for my safety, the increased violence of the storm, and the pious conflicts within her own breast, sank down and swooned upon mine arm: whilst I supported her with what tenderness I could, taking off my coarse pilgrim's mantle and wrapping it around her. Those whose coming had been thus tumultuously made known unto us, soon drew near, being a band of divers servitors of the abbey, hastily summoned together by the Lord Abbot on the tidings which he had received; with whom they proceeded unto the garden, to put forth, or, peradventure, to secure for vengeance, the sacrilegious intruder who had violated the hallowed sanctuary.

"Holy St. Mary!" exclaimed the Lord Abbot as he approached the spot whereon the Lady Bride and myself were standing, and the light of the torches, with which the various servitors pressed forward, flashed upon us,—"Blessed St. Mary! what do I behold?—the Lady Bride!—Now, may God so speed us, as we would have

held this a foul slander, had we not seen with our own eyes the daughter of a king and sister of a queen consorting with a night-ruffian! one of whom our Lord well speaketh in the Gospel, saying '*Qui non intrat per ostium in ovile ovium, sed ascendit aliunde, ille fur est, et latro;*' he who entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. Seize him, therefore, my children, let him not escape; for if justice be maintained in England, it must fall upon such as profane the houses of God."

The servitors whom he brought with him were not slow to execute his commands with much contumely and reviling, so that it was almost in vain for me to attempt to speak, whilst many hands at once grasped my garments, and restrained my limbs.—Nevertheless the Lady Bride still clung unto me senseless, whereupon I shook myself free from the servitors, and bearing her unto the Abbot, resigned her unto him; bidding him work his will with me, so that she were instantly conveyed unto a fitting shelter. This he straightway commanded to be done,—and so were we again parted; yet natheless I felt me glad, even in that troublous hour, when I found that the swooning of the Lady Bride brought upon my head all the fault which I feared should have fallen upon hers. For now the Abbot, again taking up the word, addressed me with "monster of impiety! love of godliness I well deem thou hast none, yet do I marvel that thou hast lost all sense of fear; for though thou mightest brave the power of man, yet how didst thou dare, presumptuous as even

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thou art, to defy the wrath of heaven which cometh forth against thee from the skies? Wast thou not afraid to attempt beguiling the daughter of a sovereign, or to withdraw from her holy 'spousals the innocent lamb devoted unto the cloister? and that too, even in the storm which spake full loudly how the anger of God was already kindled against thee."

His tone was not less solemn than reproachful, and, deeming me guilty, I have since thought that he might well speak thus, and point for confirmation of his words unto the skies, which were still ever and anon bright with the lightning. Then, noting the heavy torrents of rain which were falling, he stopped mine attempted reply, saying, "And even the waters that now deluge the earth seem, with fitting emblem, to reproach thy crime, as if the skies wept that such daring evil should stain the beauty of God's lower world.—But the tempest rages fiercely; lead on the prisoner, my children, and let us go hence."

They who had me in charge, then quickly and rudely hurried me from the garden into the broad abbey-hall, where a fire was blazing, and many persons were assembled full curious to know more of that night's adventure. Of this company there was one whom I had in nowise thought to behold, being none other than the rustic pilgrim from the Tabard hostel. I soon found that it was he who had betrayed me unto the abbot: for he recounted how it had been told at the inn, that the Lady Bride was presently living at Bermondsey until her consecration at Easter; how he had marked my sudden starting

and going forth: and how he had closely dogged my steps, watched mine actions, and finally removed my ladder; catching up and repeating, moreover, those half-uttered words by which men do ofttimes indicate their concealed purposes.

"And what evil had I done unto thee," said I at length, looking full sternly at mine accuser, "that thou shouldest thus malevolently—Ha!—what!—Bernard Schalken!" I exclaimed, as the light for a moment fell upon his fierce and reckless visage, and his hair was suddenly blown aside,—"is it indeed Bernard Schalken? nay, then, I will demand no farther of one to whom good faith is all unknown."

"What says this man, fellow?" inquired the abbot of Bermondsey, "art thou in truth that Bernard Schalken, who served Sir James Tyrrell, what time the deaths of the princes Edward and Richard were in question, and who afterward passed into the train of the late usurper's favourite, Sir Gilbert De Mountford?—if thou art indeed he, begone at once, nor hope for entertainment here: since thou hast ever had the name of a brawling and violent soldier, and so art all unfit to serve in a house consecrated unto God."

"Why I trow well," hereunto replied the rude soldier, "that there may be holier ones than your wandering lance-men, and that I've been no better than my fellows: but then I wot that I've journeyed both to Canterbury and to Walsingham, to get me absolution from all that I've done heretofore, and so I threw the load of my sins into the cowls of the priests who took my confession there. And, now, by the mass! I take

myself to be all another man, and a mighty good Christian; whereof I took this certificate from the friars that absolved me. Well I deem that I bade them make it an ample testimonial, on peril of their bones, albeit I read neither Latin nor English. An' ye desire, therefore, for somewhat to recommend me to your favour, Lord Abbot, read me o'er this scroll, the which, the priests said, should speed me any where."

And with these irreverent words Bernard Schalken drew forth a piece of vellum, with two names and signs of the cross subscribed thereunto, the which, when the abbot had read, he answered in somewhat of a scoffing voice, "Truly this certificate shall speed thee away from every place where thou shalt show it; for I see that the good priests who have subscribed it deem of thee much as I do. Howbeit, in the hope that the knowledge of this writing may lead thee unto repentance and amendment of life, listen while I construe it unto thee."

"Forasmuch as I find Bernard Schalken, the bearer hereof, to be a brawling robber and lewd and impenitent soldier, I absolve him from all his good deeds, of which I find few or none in him; and I restore unto him all his evil acts, whereof he hath an abundance,—until he shall repent him heartily, make restitution for his plunder and life of violence, and resolve, by God's grace, to life hereafter unto His glory. Witness my hand, on the feast of St. Matthias the Apostle, the sixth of the calends of March: Nicholas Blunt, Priest of the shrine of our lady at Walsingham.

"'I also do fully concur in the foregoing, and

in token thereof have subscribed my name unto the same, this sixth of the ides of March, the commemoration of the forty martyrs of Sebaste: STEPHEN PLAINWAYS, Priest of the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, archbishop and martyr.'"*

"How now, fellow," added the abbot unto the soldier when he had finished reading his certificate, "this is a goodly testimonial unto thy life, truly! what sayest thou hereunto?"

"But little unto you, Lord Abbot," then responded the unabashed Bernard, "saving that I ween all priests be alike knaves; but to others, perchance, I may tell a longer and a graver tale for their foul leasing-making. An' in truth I be not absolved, let them look to it who made me think so, for 'twas enough that I believed it; and well I wot that the fragments of the fair gold chain which I left at their shrines, might have blotted out worser crimes than mine."

"Impenitent and hardened man!" then began the Lord Abbot in a bold and severe voice, for the honest zeal whereof I could not but laud him in mine own mind, although he entreated me with much evil and contumely,—"Ill-minded and ignorant sinner! is the offering unto God of such a a base portion of thy plunder, like a maimed and spotted sacrifice, to blot out the crimes of a whole life of violence, rapine, and blood? In truth it was an abomination, being like unto that whereof the prophet Malachy speaketh, saying, '*Non est*

* Similar language to the above is actually used by Erasmus, in his Colloquy of the Life of a Soldier.

Mihi voluntas in vobis, dicit Dominus Exercituum, et munus non suscipiam de manu vestra.' My will is not in you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not receive an offering at your hands. Believe it, unhappy man, that the penitent psalm '*Misere me Deus,*' uttered with bended knees and sorrowful heart at God's altar, with a single penny given to the poor, and a firm purpose to lead a new life, shall do more towards winning the grace of heaven, than if thou hadst walked barefoot from hence to Palestine, and gave the collected spoil of thy whole life unto the shrines of Christendom. Depart from hence, speedily, since thou art pollution unto our house, a spot of leprosy unto our walls. I enjoin thee no penance, since thy very lusts and crimes will at last be heavier than aught which I could impose; therefore, begone, and, if thou canst, repent thee and amend!"

Hereupon the lance-man was put forth, yet as he went out, methought even he was somewhat abashed by the solemn speech of the abbot, since he said, "A plague upon the knaves who have stirred up this coil! and a mischief be upon you, too, for disturbing my conscience which was quiet enow before!" and so he departed from the chamber.

"Having purified our dwelling of one evil-doer," the abbot again began, looking at me with much contumely and anger, "it now remaineth that we proceed with fitting rigour towards another; towards him, who, like the worst of night-robbers, hath broken into the Lord's heritage in the hours of darkness."

At these words mine anger rose quickly, and my spirit kindled at the indignity cast upon me, so that, had mine hands been free, I know not what outrage I might have committed: but my limbs being now under close restraint, I could only reply unto him in a haughty tone, "Lord Abbot, I pray you to forbear this speech, seeing that, albeit you may not know me, I am yet of noble birth, and therefore it befits neither myself to hear, nor you to utter any such scorn."

The abbot was not slow in his answer hereunto, saying, in a scoffing voice, "Marry, one might well deem that some ale-wife or host had been full bounteous of their store unto thee, which hath called forth these strange dreams of greatness in thy bemused brain; seeming, as thou dost, to be little better than a beggar."

"Beggar!" repeated I then, with wondrous indignation, "mark me, Sir Priest, that name belongs not unto me, so truly as it doth unto yourself, and your hosts of idle monks and cowled compeers; albeit ye feed richly, lie softly, and go flaunting in the gayest robes vanity can devise for ye. I repeat unto ye, once more, that I am of the noblest blood of this nation; though now, by stress of circumstance, I am subject unto thy power and reviling taunts,—yet am I still neither inferior, nor even equal, of thine, in all the pomp and pride which thou canst call around thee."

"An' boldness in evil might make thee great," returned the abbot therewith, "truly thou wouldest be of high degree; but I now bethink me, that the caitiff who hath gone, affirmed that thou wert no other than the issue of the murtherous Ri-

chard, Duke of Gloucester, and this, perchance, is thy boasted greatness."

"He spake the sooth for once," answered I with lofty voice, "for I am indeed the son of the noble King Richard, and a Plantagenet!"

"I well deem," replied the abbot, "that thou art little better than another mean adventurer from Burgundy; but, whether thy speech be false or true, methinks thy wit must be at a low ebb to hope that this name would advance thee unto aught but a scaffold. For if thou wert indeed the offspring of Richard, what couldest thou be but his unlawful issue, and son to a murtherer slain for his tyranny and crimes? Thy lofty birth, therefore, will do thee but small good here; though, being faithfully reported, it may be of some slight import unto King Henry."

"Then unto him be it told," answered I, with scorn, "I fear not to die, or to add my blood unto that of the many victims whom he hath already cut off from my noble house; and he will find me full worthy of the name of Plantagenet. My form he may indeed reduce unto a bloody corse upon the scaffold, but upon the soul that animates it hath he no power; since its native dignity shall never be abated, even when I bow me unto the axe of the headsman."

"That triumph may indeed be thine," rejoined the abbot, in a scoffing tone, "and as thou claimest such high dignity, thou shalt have fitting honour paid thee, in a larger guard and a different lodging than I did at first purpose for thee. On the word of an abbot thy royalty shall be carried unto a palace, and I will give thee a brave retinue to

wait around thy noble person, until thou art safely bestowed at Sheen; or, perchance, until thou shalt lack a guard no longer."

At this moment I well might understand the great hazard of my condition, never doubting that my life was indeed forfeited; for I had, peradventure, been too rash in avowing my birth and noble blood. Yet nevertheless, the thought that I was not the base person they deemed me, and the consciousness of mine own good faith in entering the abbey, I felt would sustain me under any violence; and I looked steadily forward unto mine only remaining duty, namely, to die like the son of a king.

In the meantime the abbot had summoned his yeomen to arm themselves, mount, and carry me on to the palace of Sheen, where the court was to be at the feast of Easter; and we set out forthwith, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. The skies were now full dark, though the storm was over; and, after riding hard through the night, by about the hour of *Prime* we arrived at that most stately abode for royalty, which Harry Tudor had then lately erected, and called Richmond after his own title.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTIVE'S STORY OF HIS IMPRISONMENT.

Because my birth to kings allied,—
Ah me! how cruel the pretence!
My name offends the ear of pride,
My being born is mine offence.
* * *
And who can tell the pangs so keen
That such ill-fated lovers know?
Where towers and bars arise between.
Dark spies above and guards below.

In vain for me the sun doth rise,
In vain for me the moon doth shine,
The smiling earth ne'er cheers mine eyes,
Here doom'd in misery to pine.

MICKLE'S BALLAD OF ARABELLA STUART.

WHEN the abbot's yeomen and myself arrived at Sheen, I was betowed in a strong upper chamber in one of the towers of that fair palace; in the which captivity I had space of time enow to pine over my past fortunes, for with the future I deemed that I had now little or nothing to do.

Yet even in that place of mine imprisonment, I learned some things concerning the fatal night whereof I have recounted the story, and that cleared up certain of the dark passages of my life. It would have been no marvel had my soul been overcome with heaviness at the hazard wherein I was now placed, yet did I feel less for

myself thanfor the Lady Bride, whom I ever regarded as sacrificed unto Harry Tudor's jealousy of the house of York, even from her very youth, albeit she was so well fitted for the veil and the cloister. It was told unto me by my rude, though friendly keeper, that after my departure to Sheen, she was full sternly reproved and dealt with for my sake; for albeit I only was guilty herein, yet would none believe that I had ventured unto her of mine own will alone: therefore did she endure a twofold mistrust, being thought both to have invited my trespass, and after perversely to have denied it. Hereupon full soon was the royal damsel withdrawn from Bermondsey, not even staying her purposed consecration, and conveyed unto a remote convent, the name whereof was carefully hidden from my knowledge; and I did fear that still more rigorous dealings were used towards her, since, I should have noted, that Henry deemed him now to have small tie unto her house, seeing that her sister, the Queen Elizabeth, had deceased on the 11th day of February, in the year 1503. The thought of her sorrow, made yet more gloomy the sad season which I passed imprisoned at Sheen; for albeit I was in a full stately palace, the narrow chamber where I was confined was heavily barred and bolted, and little better for its lonely inhabitant, than the murky dungeon of a common jail.

It was long before the council came together at this place, for that Henry and his ministers were taken up with devising, how best to strengthen his throne against any sudden motion in favour of the house of York, which many in the realm

still affected; and they feared, moreover, that, as in truth his best claim unto the crown was through his late queen, some of the nation should think that he could hold it only in trust for his young heir. Harry Tudor had also a scheme afoot for a new marriage with the queen-dowager of Naples, because of the great riches which her late lord had willed unto her; but when the secret English commissioners learned that she should inherit no such wealth, they were recalled, and their master thought of this device no longer.

About the feast of Easter, the privy council all met at Sheen, whither Harry himself had already come in great pomp, but, as I beheld his followers unto the palace from my lofty and well-defended window, I should rather have said in *great fear*: else why was that guard around him of tall and mounted yeomen, clad in his liveries of red and blue, half being armed with bows and arrows and the other half with harquebusses, and all wearing armour with great swords? The like hereof had never been seen in England, until Harry established them in fear at his coronation, and had never disbanded them: but it was not thus I trow in the days of King Richard, and for why? because he trusted unto his own valour and the good faith of his subjects; which this usurping Earl, this wily, but "shallow Richmond," as my father would sportively call him, could never do. Now, indeed, I wot that these yeomen are continued as the proper retinue of state, so men do nothing note them; yet, albeit I had seen the French King's band of Scots archers, it did somewhat surprise me to find that a sovereign of these

realms could not travel in safety, unless he were surrounded by this guard of mercenaries.

When that I was at length brought before the council, I was full closely questioned upon all points; as well those affecting mine adventure at Bermondsey, as those regarding mine own lineage and quality. But as I was now no longer under the wild rule of sudden passion, I deemed it might be anything save wisdom to insist on mine high estate and royal blood; yet from love unto truth I might not unsay what I had already declared, the which was not slightly noted by the council, and methought I was the more harshly dealt with because I had too openly avowed myself the issue of one who had worn England's crown: but, peradventure, this was only a phantasy of mine own. Howbeit, as none of the charges against me did seem to amount unto treason or to touch my life, the wily Harry was minded rather to court unto his interest such of the house of York and its favourers as were yet remaining. He himself averred, that he sought not the death of obscure foes or silly and misled souls, but used his rigour only to bring low and abate, the high stomachs of such wild people as were bred up in seditious factions and civil rebellions. Whereupon it seemed from mine after-fate, as if himself and his council had resolved rather to suppress all knowledge of me and let me slide out of memory, than presently to persecute me; for I was ordered to be removed for a brief space until other witnesses should be sought for, and other proofs brought up against me, when, peradventure, it was alway intended to keep me an unknown captive, like

my cousin Edward Plantagenet, and upon fitting occasion to put me to death.

When I did thus appear before Henry in his council, I looked upon him for the last time, and I had not beheld him afore, since the fatal day when I wandered up to his guard in the battle of Bosworth-field; for I saw him not at his Queen's coronation. And, now, there was, in truth, a great and sad alteration in him; for whereas he was noted of all to have a fair complexion, and a countenance merry and smiling, methought his visage looked pale and thin, and so worn by care and pain, that I could not but pity him. His eyes were already dim of sight, and the pangs of that mistaken disease, in the fierce agonies whereof he departed,—had even at this time come upon him, and marked him with the furrows of too-early old age.

From the chamber of council I was forthwith returned unto my prison-room, where he who had me in keeping, one Walter Bolte, admonished me to be of good courage, seeing that it had fared no worse with me; for he said, had not the king been gracious, or matters showed somewhat in my favour, I had never returned with such respite. The manner of this fellow was blunt but kindly, and though I deemed it not altogether fitting for one of my sort to hold much converse with a person of his degree, yet did I not scruple to do so at this time; and I thereupon demanded of him, wherefore he augured so favourably of my condition.

"Truly," answered he, "because it hath full rarely chanced, that they who have not had money

to make large fine unto his Grace for the weal of his people, have been retained for any second hearing before the council; and I shrewdly guess that your purse is not deep enow to buy such delay."

"Small profit," rejoined I, "is likely to arise from that delay unto me, if my second trial, as you term it, should be no better than the first: it may, perchance, somewhat put off the hour of my fall, but I trow well that 'twill scarcely prevent it."

"Nay," replied Walter, thereupon, "and 'twere unreason to hope for it, so I prithee deem not that I would so mislead you, as to cause you to think that your life may be saved; I meant but to show that you should take comfort in this pause."

"Alas!" did I exclaim then, as if speaking unto myself, "my fate is but as I weened it must be; and at all events I must be deprived of life."

"Yea, even so," responded the jailer, "as I judge."

"Why, then," demanded I, "would you give me such false comfort, and wherefore do you deem that I have cause for rejoicing, inasmuch the council hath not yet condemned me?"

"Why, in chief," answered Walter, "because it looked unto me that you are in much favour in having space to make up your peace with heaven, which hath not oft been granted I promise you;—and then, because I thought even your death might be made somewhat more supportable than the same hath been in many other cases; the which I can overname for your edification and comfort, an you list to hear them."

"But, notwithstanding all," returned I there-

unto, "you still tell me that I must certainly [illegible]."

"Ay, truly," added Walter, as if in surprise at my speech, "that did I ever think must be the end of all; nor doubted that you would do the like. For, to say nought of your sacrilege, you could little expect that the avowed son of the evil duke of Gloucester would be let live when so many mock princes have been disturbing the realm by their lawless uprisings."

"Then in heaven's name! thou quibbling knave," questioned I, "what was the goodly abatement of penalty you held out to me, wherein you deemed I stood so fair, and whence I might hope so much?"

"Good words, master Plantagenet," responded the wearisome keeper, "good words, and I care not if I tell you that too. And so you may first note, if indeed you know it not already, that to die is what none 'scape, it being every man's lot; *argal*, the evil or sorrow, of death, in one condemned thereunto for his misdoings, ariseth not from taking of his life, but from the sad array and doleful circumstance of execution: perceive ye me herein? Now, since your matters have taken so fair a turn, it may be that the king in his great clemency,—he being convinced that you are in truth of royal blood,—may put you to death in the pleasant manner that one of your house was by king Edward the Fourth, as I well remember, and so drown you in a butt of good Sherris-sack!"

"And is that *all* the mercy," said I, "which I may look for at your king's hand?"

"*All!* quotha," replied the amazed Walter

Bolte, "to see, now, how unthankful are some men! But gramercy! good friend, I pray thee tell no man that I promised thee such goodly chance! I spake but of what *might* happen, an thy good luck continued; yet would I not have thee too cheerfully hope therefore."

"Truly," responded I, "'tis not coveted by me, if such be all the clemency I may look to."

"Why this is well," added Walter, "moderate desires bring fewest disappointments, and thou mightest at last look in vain for so princely and merry a death; yet still would I comfort thee with the knowledge that, at the worst, thou wilt but lose thy life by a stout cord and a high gibbet; or that, in consideration of all doubts, his grace, ever merciful and most gentle, will show thee the special favour of taking thine head by a sharp axe and a sure headsman."

"Since it must be so, then," said I once more, "I trust his grace will not refuse me the attendance of one of the good friars from the monastery here at Sheen, to take my confession and prepare me for death. Therefore, if you will furnish me with the means, I will eftsoons write this most reasonable request unto the privy-council."

"Not by mine avisement or aid, Master Plantagenet," rejoined the good Walter Bolte, as methought in some alarm, "'tis ever best to let great folks have their own way, and if the king and council forget you, why, do you forget them, and so be even. And for your soul, I warrant that you and I can guard it without ever a barefooted friar coming hither; for when such visiters come unto my guests, I have noted that they tarry not

long after with me, since the executioner is the confessor's henchman: so I pray you to think no more of a friar."

Unto this wise counsel I assented, although I answered nothing thereunto, yet I saw well that he who spake meant me fairly, and believed that his discourse, rude as it was, would give me much comfort; albeit he was somewhat hardened by his office of jailer, and had learned to think full lightly of death upon the scaffold, and even to speak of it with a leer and a jest. But, sooth to say, I was ever ill-prepared to welcome such consolation; for though I would have braved death in the field, or have essayed to meet him calmly in the chamber, I did nevertheless shrink from encountering him like a guilty miscreant.

And such was the ordinary course of my keeper's converse during mine imprisonment at Sheen; for, like many persons of his condition, he was ever most ready to recognise the royal grace and forbearance, when it was shown in the fashion I have here recounted. Howbeit, his wonder did much increase, when all that year passed away and I still remained unpersecuted, and even unnoted, by Henry and his council, saving that they yet held me a close prisoner. Farther than this, also, the year 1506 came on, and, peradventure, would, unto me, have glided away like the foregoing, in sad captivity and that deferred hope which maketh the heart sick,—when, in the very beginning thereof, a strange release was wondrously provided for me, and was quicker in approach than I could either have hoped or trusted.

It was, then, in the night-season of Monday, the fifth day of January, whilst the bell for *lauds* was sounding forth from the convent of observant-friars adjoining unto the palace, that, on a sudden, the slow and heavy toll was changed into a loud and hurried note of alarm; and the stillness of that silent spot was broken by loud and repeated shouts of "Fire in the king's lodgings!"* Full narrow was the space from the lofty window of my chamber, yet as I watched at it, I did at length behold how the devouring element came fiercely on, triumphing over state-chamber and gallery, as they were spread out both above and beneath the turret wherein I was prisoned, whereunto it was full quickly approaching. At length the blaze from beneath mounted upwards unto my window, and was borne inward by the night-blast with divers pieces of burning timber; the like being also cast upon the roof of my tower, which I deemed would forthwith set fire unto the rafters thereof: for it seemed to have been ordained that the last of the Plantagenets should have somewhat of a royal death, by perishing in the flames of a burning palace!

The great and sudden hazard wherein this mischance placed me, caused me to call loudly upon my keeper, who lodged in a chamber adjoining unto mine own; but no answer came, even though I repeated my call still more loudly. I then shook my door, and, much to mine amaze, found it unfastened; whereupon, passing into the keeper's room, I saw that it was empty and the

* Some notice of this fire is recorded in Stow's Chronicle.

door thereof left open, as if he had hastily quitted it. Well I ween, that the desire of escape and the hope of liberty did now glance full brightly over my mind, but anon I thought upon the many doubts attending the same; as finding my way unchallenged through the winding passages and many chambers of the palace, and then of avoiding pursuit either by land or water, the which seemed unto me almost impossible. Howbeit, I resolved at all hazards to make the essay, and, musing on my course, passed through a portal in my prison-turret, which suddenly brought me upon certain leads above the chambers that were on fire. Whilst I was searching around me for another way from that place, much doubting how to proceed, I felt one forcibly grasp mine arm, and say, in a low and rude voice, "Hah! this is well, Master Plantagenet, we meet in good hour for both of us; though, perchance, somewhat inopportunely in stopping your course hence."

"Had my keeper been in his own place," was mine answer, "I had not been here, and even now I left not my chamber until 'twas too hot to lodge longer in, as you may behold, nor until I had more than once vainly summoned the jailer. The door opened beneath my grasp as I shook it, I wandered here,——"

"And would eftsoons have strayed out yonder," interrupted the soldier, whom I saw by the light of the flames to be no other than the fierce and fraudful Bernard Schalken, looking upon me with a visage of much scoffing and violence; "howbeit. 'tis not unto me that thou must answer for thy purposed escape. Nay, farther, only reply straightly

and truly to that which I demand, and I will aid thee far better than thou canst aid thyself. But mark me, this is our last meeting, I owe you now a shrewd turn for making me known at Bermondsey, and, by the Maker of us both, I will now have either my will of thee or my revenge!"

"Thy revenge!" exclaimed I in a fearless voice, "and for what? since in nought was I ever thine enemy, albeit thou hast proved thyself to be such both unto me and many others, being altogether void of good faith. But deem me not still a stripling, Bernard Schalken, I fear thee not; and neither thy will nor thy revenge,—aiding mine escape, nor ensuring my present death, shall cause me to do aught of dishonour to secure or to avoid them."

"Think better of it, comrade," thereunto answered Bernard in a scoffing and malicious voice, "and 'twill be for your most 'vantage, I promise thee. But to be as bold and brief as thyself, thus stands my desire. In the reign of thy father I was a soldier in his guard, and after became the follower of Sir James Tyrrell and Sir Gilbert De Mountford, as you wot. How they employed me, 'tis now no time to repeat, and it skills not for thee to know; but the haughty Lord Lovel was then in the height of his pride and power: he loved to check and overbear the soldiers for little cause, and once, in the wars, upon some slight matter of spoil which I had seized on, he called me 'coward plunderer,' and struck me unto the ground! I swore at fitting season to wash this out with his blood, for he was no leader of mine; but then came the fight at Bosworth, which scattered the

York host, and he betook him unto France. When he again came hither with Lambert Simnell, I was a soldier under king Henry, but in the battle of Stoke my station was against the power of Martin Schwartz, and I missed Lovel by his flight across the Trent. Had I but known of his retreat there, he should have died, had he owned a thousand lives; but I well deemed he was drowned, as others did, until Israel was taken secretly wandering about Minster-Lovel and baffled all questions and tortures to get from him the name and retreat of the fugitive. Then didst thou suddenly appear in the state-chamber, which assured me that one was in hiding there, and that it was Lovel himself!"

"Thanks to St. Mary!" responded I then, "I 'scaped from your power by an open window and a swift foot, albeit I was only a stripling. But bethink you, ill-minded man, that eighteen years have passed since that hour; and had Lord Lovel been indeed hidden there, he must long since have been but lifeless dust."

"That may well be," replied the fierce Bernard, "yet his very dust is to me so hateful, that it would joy me to wreak my vowed vengeance even upon that; and to spurn the proud noble as he did the oppressed soldier; beside claiming the reward which is still offered for him alive or dead. And now, Plantagenet, look at that flaming gulf beneath thee, and bethink thee of the fearful death which it offers. Consent to guide me unto the haughty Lovel's retreat or sepulchre, I care not which, and, by all that men call holy or adore, I will set thee free from prison! Refuse me this,

and, by the powers of darkness! I will forthwith hurl thee from the battlements!—Nay, think not to call upon thy keeper, for all in the palace are too intent on saving body and goods to hear thee: and should thy corse be found, King Henry will reck but little so thou art dead; whilst all will deem thou hast but fallen over in seeking to escape. Once more, then, make thy decision."

"Never," then exclaimed I, firmly, "will I take my life on such degrading terms, even though the headsman's axe fell as I spake the word! And never will I disclose the pious Lord Lovel's holy place of rest unto one, who goeth with fiendish malice to feast upon the dead!"

"Then presently commit thy soul to God!" answered Bernard, thereupon seizing me with a mighty grasp, and fixing one foot half over the edge of the battlements. I now also put forth my strength to resist him, and, albeit I shuddered at the very thought of giving him unto the fearful death whereto he had doomed me, yet did I struggle to get free from him. We grappled, therefore, together for some short space, but whilst he was straining his huge frame to raise me unto the battlements, and stoutly I bent me backwards therefrom, certain of the stones trembled and gave way beneath his feet, mine own garment rent at the same moment, and loosing his hold, he reeled over with a mighty fall into the flaming gallery!

Heartsick and full of horror at this evil end of a most evil soldier, I seemed to lose all sense of mine own condition, and all desire of making mine escape; whereupon I wandered back again

to the outer chamber, enwrapped in solemn thought, and there awaited the return of my keeper, regardless of all danger around me. The fire was quenched towards morning, when Walter Bolte came back, and once more made me close prisoner, saying that my lodgings were in no hazard from the flames. About noon-tide he did again return unto me, with a soldier bearing a sharp and heavy sword, such as headsmen are sometimes wont to use upon the scaffold. The sound of their approach brake up my musings, and, on beholding them, strange thoughts came over my mind; since I deemed that mine attempted escape had been discovered, and that in the soldier I beheld mine executioner. For I had heard of kings who held it not unlawful, secretly to murther such of their prisoned foes as they listed not to bring to farther trial or open destruction; and it seemed full likely that such a fate was now purposed for me. I will not deny that I felt some dread hereat; for albeit I should thus 'scape the dishonour of dying on a public scaffold, yet to be hurried from life in a moment and in prison, by the slaughtering hands of a secret minister of vengeance, seemed unto me to have a visage of yet greater horror.

The keeper's first address unto me was to follow him quickly, and hold silence in all I did, whilst he farther ordered the soldier with the heavy sword to close up behind me; and, from the blunt and dark manner of his speech and action, I felt me assured that I was going forthwith unto my death: whereupon I advanced slowly, at the same time demanding of him whither I was about to go.

"What matter can that be of thine?" answered he, with his wonted jest, "come away and keep not thy betters waiting; dost thou fear being set at liberty by following me?"

"No, friend," replied I, "in truth; but last night's fire had nearly done that for me without any other aid."

"Yea," responded the keeper, "there speakest thou full shrewdly; and because the king's lodging is burned, with rare beds, 'broidered carpets, velvet curtains, and royal furniture, beside much of the palace, and certain soldiers,—as thou art one of his highness's most precious things in this place, he hath resolved to send thee out of farther hazard to be kept with his other jewels in the Tower. And so follow me forth, and kept silence the whilst.—But hold thee, master,"—continued Walter Bolte, suddenly stopping in his course,—"as you may be noted in your own clothes, I am willed to see you vested in this friar's habit, wherein you must make the journey."

Therewith he produced the gown and cowl of a Benedictine monk, the which I put on, half lamenting within myself that it had not been my fortune always to wear the like; and so, relieved from the thought of instant execution, I followed my conductor: not because I was well content to do so, but because I thought that my present lot could be but little worsted, saving by death; and I also saw that if such were indeed intended, I could in nowise fly therefrom but must perforce yield unto it.

The keeper and certain guards then led me down unto the river-side, and entered with me

into a barge with two watermen; whereupon we launched away on the broad river of Thames, and drew nigh unto the ancient bridge of London when a misty evening was spreading its thickest mantle over land and water. I deemed myself now as one condemned, in being thus sent unto the Tower; with which sad thought, the horrible remembrance of Bernard's death was ever present unto my mind, and, thus disquieted, I had taken little note of our near approach unto my dreaded harbour, or of the voyage thither. Whether it were by reason of the fore-named darkness, or the false and flitting lights dimly seen through it, in divers chambers of the houses which do overhang that wondrous bridge, or from misgovernance of our vessel,—I know not; but when it entered that current which rushes with such loud noise and mighty speed through the arches, our barge was dashed against the oaken piles thereof with sudden and fearful fury, and whelmed in an instant, casting those on board into the river. The forms of all my companions were speedily lost unto me in the thick darkness of that evening, and their cries in the roaring and pouring of the wild surges, which carried along the shattered boat and hapless crew at fiercest speed down the tide, and I wot they were never more beheld of man!

For mine own part, I silently resigned my soul unto God, who could still hear me amidst the loudest clamour of the waters; but as I was hurried through the narrow arch, my course was full suddenly and wondrously stopped, by mine habit catching aginst some iron in the starling. I clung

fast thereunto, and, at length, mounted upon it remaining there until certain cords were let down from the bridge above to aid mine escape thence; and when I learned that there was now no other than myself to save, I gave hearty thanks to Heaven for mine own preservation, and deemed that I once more beheld future liberty, arising out of that which seemed no other than present and certain death.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SECOND EXILE, AND AN INVITATION AND RETREAT INTO SANCTUARY.

Adieu! Adieu! my native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue;
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.
Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight;
Farewell awhile to him and thee,
My Native Land—Good Night!

LORD BYRON.

—— They appointed an eloquent and lerned friar to preach a sermon of Contempt of the World, and of the happiness and benefit of a quiet and contemplative life; which the friar did most affectionately. After which sermon, the emperor took occasion to declare, openly, that the preacher had begotten in him a resolution to lay down his dignities, forsake the world, and betake himself to a monastic life.

IZAAK WALTON'S LIFE OF GEORGE HERBERT.

ALBEIT I had been thus most wondrously protected from the fearful chances of dying by long imprisonment, fire, water, or the hand of the executioner, and thus seemed to be again at liberty, I did still know well, that, while Harry Tudor lived, my life was not yet safe in this realm; but that I must speedily haste me beyond the seas, though I wist not how to do it, having but little money to carry me hence. As all my companions were drowned when the barge was over-

whelmed in the wild current, and as I had cast from me my friar's habit when I got me on the starling,—that being afterward found, it might be truly thought that I had met the like fate,—I might thus give what report I would of myself, so that truth were not too greatly outraged in seeking for safety. Therefore I recounted how that I had lain long space at Sheen, confined by an evil distemper, and that I was now coming thence in hope of entertainment either abroad or on the seas, with a certain company, when our boatmen, through misgovernance of the vessel or darkness of the night, dashed it against the bridge, as it was already known.

The dwelling whereto they who drew me up led me to dry my raiment, I soon quitted with thanks, and forthwith wandered unto an inn near the bridge, much frequented by shipmen, of the sign of the Great Henry; in memory of the vast ship of war so called, built for Harry Tudor, and the first royal barque of that kind which did ever float out of an English harbour. At this place, therefore, did I find divers mariners met together, discoursing on their voyage unto Bristol, the which they should begin with the tide that would presently flow, whence they were forthwith to sail in search of new countries. I did soon find that they were the captain, and some of the company, of the good ship *Dominus Vobiscum*, belonging unto Hugh Eliot and Thomas Ashurst, merchants of Bristol, and Johannes and Gonzales Fernandez, Portuguese, unto whom a patent had been granted for making discoveries upon the

seas.* Upon hearing that I was looking for entertainment, the captain, one Luigi Ramusio, who was also a Portingale, demanded if I would take service with them to see unknown lands for some three years or so, upon fair terms; adding withal, that I should forthwith declare mine intent, for that the tide was fast making, the wind blew fairly for sailing, and that his barque, which lay beside the bridge, was even then ready to depart.

It may be well thought that I desired nothing better than such an offer, and that it was soon a stricken bargain between us; for as to mine own land, it had once more become my fiercest enemy, and the Lady Bride was now lost unto me past all hope of recovery, or even of beholding again. Moreover, my strength was decayed and my soul had become full sad from long imprisonment, beside being dismayed and affrighted at the late fearful deaths of Bernard Schalken, my keeper, and the guards; and I did earnestly hope to lose the thought of these things in distant climes, wherein I might also look to gain new life, and, above all, liberty.

I do not question, but that they who shall hereafter read over this my story, will picture unto themselves, and that without my showing, the doubts and fears which I did endure, even after we got unto Bristol, until our barque was made ready for sea; lest, peradventure, I might be heard of, traced thither, and so carried back unto the Tower, where, in brief space, I should

* This instrument is printed in Rymer's Fœdera, vol. xiii. 37, and is dated December 9th, 1502.

no doubt have lost mine head. Howbeit, as God would have it, my death was deemed certain, and as I presently altered my garb and figure to look as much as I might like a shipman, and kept me close unto my vessel, I 'scaped questioning until our barque was all appointed for sailing. This was some time about the end of March; and so, having all confessed and received the sacrament by command of our captain, we did at length set our courses unto sea and depart. It were full vain to think of showing in this place, the great and wondrous histories of our voyages; both because they be all too long to write herein, and also because that divers, of great skill in the mariner's art, have penned most excellent accounts thereof, what time the brave Christopher Columbus and Sebastian Cabot went unto the same parts as we. I will, therefore, note only, that in my several voyages I saw many strange things and countries, in going unto the East and West Indies, into the south seas, and round by the coasts on the north side of America, for discovering of new lands, or finding out a north-west passage thereunto. We sailed, moreover, through the great north seas, wherein we saw the mighty morses, which be killed with great hazard for their oil; and even in the month of hot July, met with monstrous hills of ice swimming on the waves; and beheld a land, which, at this season, hath, as it were, all daylight.

And such was mine employ until the year of grace, 1509, when we were returning with good success from a voyage round by the East Sea, or Sound of Denmark; and drew fairly nigh unto

the coast of England, where the Northern Ocean washes the shores of Norfolk, it being our purpose to enter the river and harbour of Wells. The even ere we should have reached thereunto, was fair and pleasant, though, as divers of us thought, not without tokens of storm; yet were the shipmen full glad, and spent the time in merriment, even as the swan singeth before his death, not watching that most deceitful coast. Anon the wind arose, and blew vehemently from the north-at-east, bringing withal rain and thick mist, so that we might not discern land, to put in right with the haven, nor see a cable's length before us through the night. In the morning we found ourselves on flats and shifting sands, whereupon we let the ship drive unto the wind; but, beating up and down, sometimes in shallows, and sometimes in deep water, our barque at last struck a-ground, and soon after had her stern parts all beaten in pieces!—It was a most heavy and grievous damage, thus to lose, as it were at one blow, our tall ship, freighted with great provision, gathered with much care, long time, and difficulty, and specially the loss of our men to the number of almost an hundred souls. Of this our crew, there was no one who looked more resolvedly unto death than did the captain; for when all hope was past, of recovering the ship, and men began to give over and save themselves, he would not consent to fly therefrom, but betook him unto the highest deck, and I placed myself beside him, where we both commended ourselves unto God! How long he lived after I know not, for the rushing sea soon made all level; and, thereby bereft

of my senses, I floated unto the shore of Wells upon a broken piece of the vessel.

After this most hapless manner did I again get me unto my native England, where divers dwellers upon the coast received us with much charity. I learned, moreover, what were unto me good tidings, namely, that Henry of Lancaster had died some three months past; before which, in the pangs of death, he had heavily bethought him of his sins, and did what he might to blot them out by alms, prayers, and many bitter tears, as well as some endeavour at restitution unto such as he had oppressed. In especial, he passed a full remission towards all who were in any jeopardy from his laws, for things formerly done, the which made me again safe in England, even should any remember me; but I wot well that every year was now making great change in my visage, beside that it was also much altered by my travels in distant countries. The realm was at this time rejoicing in having exchanged the gloomy and rigorous sway of the first Harry Tudor, for the stately and merry governance of his young and lusty son, now called King Henry VIII.; who was a prince of good person, and much given to costly disports and pageants, albeit he was fairly read and wondrous subtle in school-divinity. Howbeit, in my mind all was now a sad and dreary waste: for that I was bereft of every friend or companion, and stood, as it were, alone in a merry world: yet, even in that most mournful hour, was I upheld by the merciful providence of God; for He, without whose will not even a sparrow falleth,

kept me from despair, and had already provided a retreat for my wearied body, and consolation for my sorrowful heart.

Having now received such aid as the poor inhabitants of Wells were able to bestow upon us, I wandered alone, and in gloomy mood, some five miles farther toward the town of Walsingham, it now being Sunday, the 22d of July, and the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, about one of the clock after noon; what time the abbey-bell had left calling together the people, to hear a sermon out of the word of God. It is all but too seldom that men be found to crowd together unto such holy exhortations, but now there were full many gathered in the nave of St. Mary's Church, to hear a certain friar preach from the stone pulpit which yet standeth in the great western window. Yet of this congregation, there were divers who came and ordered them in that most irreverent wise, which I remember me was once full common in the churches of this realm. For some would come to show their gay attire, and, therefore, strutted up and down even whiles the holy service was being said; others would meet in the porches, during matins, and babble of law-pleadings and causes, bargains, and the like; and another sort would bring with them their sparhawks and falcons, or dogs in lines and leashes: so that the whole church, and the more pious sort therein, would be all disquieted with the barking of the hounds, ringing of the hawks' bells and chains, and fluttering of their wings; beside the clatter of such as were wont to wander about

before the altars in their slippers, and most persons did ever wear their bonnets.*

The friar who was now to preach, was called brother Chrysostom, because of his sweet and holy eloquence, which brought much people to hear him; and it was told me that on this day he was to discourse of the life and pious retirement of St. Mary Magdalene, and of Contempt of the World. He was an aged man at the time wherof I write, and is now gone unto his rest and his reward, before evil days came upon his house; but as divers of his sermons were long kept in the library-room of Walsingham Abbey, I can yet set down a part of that which I did now hear.

The pious monk first told us of the history of St. Mary Magdalene, as collected out of divers good and ancient authors; showing her lineage and honourable birth of Syrus and Eucaria at Hierusalem; her dwelling at the castle of Magdalene, nigh unto Naim city, whence she took her surname; her life of sin, until her sister Martha persuaded her to go and hear one of the sermons of our Saviour, Christ; and her sudden and mighty conversion, by the wondrous words of Him who spake as never man spake. Then did he recount how she showed her repentance by anointing his feet in the house of Simon, the Pharisee; how she did thereupon receive the remission of all her sins, both *à pœnâ et à culpâ*,

* These highly irreverent customs in churches, are also described in a very curious and interesting manner in Alexander Barclay's Ship of Fools.

from the guilt and the penance: how she ever after desired to be much at the feet of Christ, never looking any other man in the face; and how, after his passion, she some time dwelt with the Virgin Mary. Moreover he instructed us, how some authors have written that, when the Gentiles persecuted the Christians, Mary Magdalene, her sister Martha, and their brother Lazarus, with Maximianus the disciple, and Gelidonius the blind man whom Christ had healed with clay put upon his eyes, Marcella, the handmaiden of Martha, and many others of the true faith, were put into an old barque, without oars or sails, and so launched forth to sea that they might be drowned. Howbeit, by the aid of God, they arrived safely at Marseilles in France, and converted all that province unto Christ; St. Lazarus being made bishop of that city, and Maximianus bishop of another called Aquius. For St. Mary Magdalene, she also converted many souls unto God, and then retired herself unto a cave in the deserts, where she led a solitary life for some thirty years, her food being herbs and roots; and in that place would she ofttimes hear celestial harmony, being lifted up by angels seven times in the day and night, two cubits from the ground.

The good monk had failed not, throughout all his discourse, to show us that, as these things were written for our instruction, there belonged unto them a mystical signification as well as a natural one; and when he arrived at the retirement of St. Mary into the deserts, he said as followeth.—"My dear brethren, I come now to show unto you the benefits of a holy retreat from the world, and

an intercourse with God. He who standeth upon a high and steadfast rock in the raging tempest, may look out unto the stormy sea and yet fear nothing of the strife of the wild waters whereon he gazeth. And herein I would have you to note, the safe and happy condition of such as have fled from the world, and are retreated unto, and resting upon, the Rock Christ; with the pity with which they can look abroad upon the fierce turmoils around them. We know that this life is a life of pain and labour, wherefore it is that rest and refection be so sweet unto men. But what, I pray you, is the rest or the refection of this world, when compared with that which our Lord offereth in Himself in the Gospel? when He saith, '*Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et Ego reficiam vos,*' come unto me, all who do labour, and ye that be heavily laden, and I will refresh you. And this is nothing else than coming out of the world into his church or service; because while we be engaged with the world, we cannot enjoy the sweetness of a holy life, nor cast from us the cares under which we labour, nor the sins wherewith we be so heavily laden.

"And now, my dear brethren, I do earnestly exhort and invite you all, to set as lightly by this world as you may, to the end that at last you may entirely quit it without sorrow. But for such of you as have few, or no ties, to hold you unto it; who have found in it nought but disappointments, enemies, and persecutions, whereof ye may well be weary; or have committed in it nought but sins, wherewith ye are indeed heavily laden;—

you do I charge at once to come out of it, unto the blessed rest and refection of Christ in solitude, where you shall be freed from all your sorrows. And think not that you give up any thing herein; since the life whereto I invite you is full of peace and heavenly rest. The holy St. Austin saith, in his book of Confessions, 'Oh! you who dote on this world, for what victory do you fight? your hopes can be crowned with no greater guerdon than the world, and what is that but a brittle thing full of dangers, wherein we travel from lesser unto greater perils? so let all its vain, light, momentary glory perish with it, and let us be conversant with more eternal things.' And to effect this, there is no course like retirement, whereof the good Abbot Gersenus showeth the benefits, in his first book of the Imitation of our Lord, when he saith what spiritual excellence belonged unto the holy fathers of old, who became aliens unto the world, but the adopted sons and intimate friends of God. They resigned riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kindred, desiring to have neither right nor part in worldly matters, leading their rigorous and solitary lives in the deserts; where, albeit, they laboured hard, prayed and fasted much, rested little, and had many fierce conflicts with the enemy himself, they did yet enjoy spiritual repose, refection, and triumph. But we invite you not unto such trials as these, which perchance men may not now endure. We call you not unto the haunted ruins of St. Anthony, the broken pillar of St. Simon, the sea-beaten cavern of St. Regulus, the desert den of St. Hierome, the open wilderness of the

Baptist, or the shelterless estate of our Lord himself, seeing that divers fair dwellings be now edified for such as list to live an holy and retired life, and give themselves unto God, after their example, showing as it were unto heaven an easier and more excellent way.

"Come, then, my dear unfortunate and penitent brethren, quit the world, enter into this holy rest, embrace at once this life of perfection, and so cast away both your sins and your sorrows. As the holy St. Chrysostom saith in his epistles, 'Contemn riches, and thus shalt thou be rich; contemn glory, and thou shalt be glorious; contemn injuries, and thou shalt be a conqueror; contemn rest, and thou shalt find repose; contemn earth,—and thou shalt gain heaven!'"

Thus ended the sermon of brother Chrysostom, whereupon his hearers hastily crowded out of the church, much praising his passing sweet discourse; albeit, peradventure, none purposed to amend his life thereby, or to leave the delights of the world, that he might give himself unto prayer, meditation, and solitude. But, for mine own part, I still remained standing in the midst of the nave of St. Mary's church, musing on the retirement whereof the preacher had spoken; thinking how long since it had been embraced and enjoyed by the Lady Bride, and deeming that it was well befitting unto me in my present sad estate; the which brought tears into mine eyes, even in spite of my endeavours to restrain them. Whilst thus absorbed in sorrow, I remembered not that those around me might be led to note, and, peradventure, to scoff, at mine affliction; deeming that

as I marked not who stood near me or passed me by, so I might remain unmarked of all others.

But whilst I was thus sadly musing, the voice of one behind me thus suddenly brake upon mine ear: "*Pax vobiscum*, my son; dost thou seek aught in the abbey, or hast thou not marked that the people have departed, seeing that the holy service is ended?" Upon which salutation I turned me, and, beholding the aged monk who had been preaching, I replied, "Truly, good father, I was so lost in contemplating your fervent invitations unto a holy retirement, with mine own sorrows and present forlorn condition, that I wist not that I stood here alone. *Vale, pater reverendissime*, I will forthwith retire."

But ere I might turn from him, the good father Chrysostom laid his hand upon my garment, saying, "And wherefore weepest thou, my son? and why is thy heart thus sorrowful? bethink thee that to lament as those who have no hope, is both idle and sinful in such as are the heirs of immortal happiness; seeing that this life is but very brief, and that the unchangeable and eternal kingdom of God is at hand."

Both the words of this speech, and the voice of him who addressed me, fell with refreshing sweetness upon my wo-worn soul: like as the evening dew falleth upon the fainting frame of him, who hath travelled over the deserts through the scorching noon-tide. I replied, then, by saying that, from the loss of all mine earthly friends, and the overthrow of all my worldly hopes, I well knew the shortness and uncertainty of life, and that I did indeed desire to be rid thereof and enter upon

a better. But that as I must still say with holy Job, that I would await my time until my change come, so, until that hour arrived, to feel and to bemoan sorrow was only the portion of man, whatever were his future hopes: even as the bravest and stoutest barque was still tossed upon the billows, though her pilot were ever so skilful, and her haven full in sight.

"Yea," answered the monk, "that may well be, seeing that the wood and metal whereof ships be made, are alway subject unto the laws of this material world; and so must rise and sink as the waters swell and fall, and drive before the winds as they do change. But I ween that it is full different with the immortal mind of man, for that being a spark from God's own spirit, may still rise above the created things of this visible world; whilst the hopes which faith brings will sustain the Christian hero under all present evils, by the glorious prospect which she openeth to him of future joy."

I assented unto his kind and holy admonitions, and, as my spirit grew somewhat lightened thereby, we passed towards the cloister, having fallen into a conference which lasted some space; for the good father Chrysostom had so won upon me with his discourse and gentle manners, that I told him such part of my sorrowful life as I best might with prudence disclose, saying that I was the son of a great noble who was slain at Bosworth field. On hearing this, whilst he censured me like some grave saint for yielding unto despair, he wept as a man over my sufferings; adding thereunto, "Son of sorrow, as I may with truth call

thee, thy woes have indeed been heavy, yet forget not the word of the Lord which thou hast this day heard; and since thou hast been thus evil entreated by the world, at once abandon it, and forthwith hasten unto God for rest."

"And whither, good father," demanded I, "whither shall I retreat? I trow well that the world hath small charms for me, so that I would be rid of it by any lawful means; and my most fervent hope is to devote me hereafter unto the cloister."

"If such," responded the monk, "be in truth thy sincere and steadfast wish, on proof thereof, I would gladly give my poor aid to make thee known unto the lord prior of this abbey, William Lowth, and the brethren of our Lady of Walsingham. So that thou mayest shelter thee at once under the covering wings of the church; and, being so admitted, become more and more estranged from suffering and from sin. Yet let me add, good brother, that it is no small thing to dwell in monasteries blameless and free from reproach; for, as St. Anselm well noteth, 'tis not the habit or tonsor which maketh the monk, but a change of heart and a mortification of the passions. But full happy is he, as the abbot Gersenus saith, who in this state hath passed his days in innocency, and closed them with success!"

I gave him hearty thanks for his offer and admonitions, most gladly accepting of the same, telling him that I had been bred in a Benedictine monastery, and was therefore somewhat acquainted with the rule of a conventual life; and so, after the wonted trials, was I safely entered

as a convert, and afterward as a canon, in the abbey of Walsingham, by the name of brother Richardus, of Ely.

I may never forget, albeit the remains of the good Chrysostom have long since mouldered away, the spiritual consolation which God willed that I should ever find in him, but specially in his words at this time. They seemed to give unto my famished and enfeebled spirit, the succour which the Hebrews found in the manna, that was wondrously rained around their camp: whilst his example seemed unto me like a voice in the desert, or the pillars of cloud and fire, to guide me through the wilderness of this world. Before becoming a brother of his abbey, the desires which I had heretofore formed of a monastic life often came back unto my memory, and I saw in the interview which I have now recounted, the means of realizing that holy contentment and tranquillity I had ever fondly looked unto; albeit, in the anxious troubles of my changeful life, they had been ofttimes disregarded or forgotten.

Yet would I neither deny nor conceal that, even whilst thus resigning the world, some painful remembrances of my former love, and dreams of greatness, hung about mine heart, whereof my fantasy would frame a full gay picture of what might have been, the which vain expectancies I had now renounced for ever. Yet had I no merit in thus yielding up mine earthly love or ambitious hopes unto heaven, for conscience whispered unto me, that I had resigned them only when I might never hope to possess them. Howbeit, like too many who bring a seeming rich gift

unto the altar, I wished, full weakly, to glorify myself for sacrificing the world unto God: yet do I now shrewdly fear that, had I ever attained unto the wild dreams of my youth, and had been united unto the Lady Bride,—neither the blessed content of a holy life, nor a saint's golden palm or starry diadem, nor the unseen and unspeakable joys of heaven itself,—would have led me, weak as I was, contentedly to have resigned them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIFE OF A RELIGIOUS RECLUSE, AND A ROYAL PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM.

Welcome, pure thoughts! Welcome, ye silent groves!
These guests, these courts, my soul most dearly loves—
A prayer-book now shall be my looking-glass,
In which I will adore my Maker's face.
Here dwell no hateful looks, no palace cares,
No broken vows dwell here, nor pale-faced fears;
Then here I'll sit, and sigh my hot youth's folly,
And learn to affect an holy melancholy;
And if contentment be a stranger,—then
I'll ne'er look for it, but in Heaven, again.

SIR HENRY WOTTON.

As I went to Walsingham,
To the shrine with speede,
Met I with a jolly palmér,
Clad in a pilgrim's weede.

OLD BALLAD CITED BY BISHOP PERCY.

"FIAT PAX IN VIRTUTE TUA, ET ABUNDANTIA IN TURRIBUS TUIS!" Let peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy towers! was insculped above the chief gate of that holy monastery which had now become mine abode. And, in good sooth, it seemed unto me, as if I had suddenly found there the tranquillity which the world giveth not nor takes away;—the quiet rest for which I had long been searching: since the storms and dreariness of mine heart had suddenly

passed, the tempest ceased, and there was a great calm. It seemed as if the tumults of the world could now reach me no more; and as though the wild confusion which I had once beheld therein, was but a troublous dream of the night out of which I was happily awakened. Yea, and not only awakened, but called therefrom to think upon the fairest images of celestial glory, which pointed out a heaven hereafter, and almost gave me a revelation of the beatific vision, even whilst I was yet upon earth.

I will not here set down how stately and fitting a temple of God was the far-famed abbey of Walsingham, in its days of glory; because, all despoiled and dishonoured as it hath since been, enough of it remaineth to speak somewhat of its wonted magnificence; and to show that he whom holy contemplation or calamity had weaned from the base and fleeting enjoyments of life, might not desire a fairer asylum wherein to give his last days unto devotion, repose, or sacred tranquillity.

Yet was not so rich and noted a shrine as this, so retired from the world as to hear no reports of that which was passing abroad; because, through the frequent visitations of pilgrims and others, many tidings of public things found their way even unto this holy retreat, some whereof were written into our own chronicles to keep them in memory.—Thus, we heard how the fraudful instruments of the late Henry Tudor's extortion, Sir Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, in the year 1510, were convicted and executed as traitors; their meaner agents being killed by the people. It was told us how in 1513, the new Pope Leo

X. entered into a league with King Henry against Louis XII. of France, sending unto him a barque laden with choice viands and rich wines as gifts, and indulgences and holy symbols for such as should go with him to war against that country. Anon we heard how Henry had gone upon that expedition in person, with much state, having a great power of near 15,000 men; and retaining the famous Almaine Emperor Maximilian and his host, who wore St. George's cross, and had an hundred crowns for their daily payment. Thereafter came the battle of the Spurs, and the taking of Tournay, and then the Earl of Surrey's victory over the Scots at Floddon-field, wherein King James IV. was slain; whereupon Queen Catherine came unto Walsingham, and returned our Lady great thanks for the same: and in 1514 we were told of a treaty of peace with France, and how Henry's younger sister, Mary, was married unto King Louis. About this time, moreover, we heard much of the sudden, yet deserved, greatness of Thomas Wolsey, an especial favourite of the late Henry of Lancaster, who now became Lord High Chancellor; being, at the same time, a cardinal-legate, archbishop of York, and the holder of two bishoprics, with many other great church-dignities *in commendam*. So powerful and rich a priest was certainly never seen in England, and he was withal fitted for much honour, being a great statesman and a good scholar, though somewhat proud and vain-glorious; but his full sad fall, many years after this, made me to pity him yet more than I had ever blamed him. In the year 1516, I remember me that the Queen

Catherine took unto her chamber in great state, and that we were ordered to make prayers that she should have a good hour; the which did soon after follow in the birth of the Princess Mary; that now is, at Greenwich, on Monday, the 8th day of February, about four of the clock in the morning, whereupon thanksgivings were commanded to be said throughout England. The next year had but few things of much note, saving a great insurrection of the London apprentices against the merchant-strangers of their city, for the which many were executed; and a fearful return of the sweating sickness, which carried away such as were taken with it within three hours after, whereby some towns had half of their inhabitants suddenly swept away.—But all these events, albeit I noted them with some attention when they were first imparted, came unto us so uncertainly, and often so long after the times at which they chanced, that they seemed unto me to be scarcely the tidings of real actions, but rather the pictures thereof; like unto those which amuse the eyes of childhood, in the history of ages gone by, and leave but few traces upon the wit or the memory.

Howbeit, a season did at last arrive, when tidings of great import unto our abbey were brought thither with unwonted haste. The youth of the second Harry Tudor had been for the most part spent in revelry and costly disports; for, when he came unto that throne which his father had violently rent from mine, he was much favoured of the people, for his lusty and laughing disposition of mind rather than for his grace or

piety. But he now signified that he had a purpose of rendering honour unto the shrine of our lady of Walsingham, by visiting the same in kingly state, albeit with the lowly demeanour and signs of a pilgrim. He had indeed already travelled hither in 1511, between the Feast of the Purification and the Queen's Churching, and made an offering of half a mark, but such pious conduct as that now declared unto us, was on his part all unlooked-for by me; yet may I say that I was in truth inwardly rejoiced thereat, inasmuch as that the son should thus seem to do some penance, and make some atonement, for the sins of the father.

William Lowth, who, as I have said, was lord prior of Walsingham Abbey when I became a brother. thereof, was forced, from a contention with his canons, to lay down his honours on the 31st day of August, in the year 1514, after whom came one Richard Vowell, prior of Lees, in Essex, who held our abbey, at the time of Henry's visit; namely on Tuesday, the Feast of the Nativity of our Lady, the sixth of the Ides of September, or eighth day thereof, in the year of grace 1517. It was by him deemed good, albeit the king came in such lowly and beseeming guise, that our house and shrine should make large display of the wealth belonging thereunto: though this methought was vain, seeing that the revenues of the fraternity were but small, though the riches of St. Mary's shrine were indeed great.*—

* Dugdale states the possessions of this monastery to have been valued at 391*l.* 11*s.* 7½*d.* annually; but Speed calls them 446*l.* 14*s* 4½*d.*, besides the offerings to the shrine, which have been estimated at 260*l.* 12*s.* 4½*d.* yearly.

These, therefore, were all set forth, to show how eminent had been the zeal of former benefactors thereunto; and so to win the king to emulate the greatest of their gifts.

The spot wherein the chiefest beauty and glory of this most famous shrine were shown, was a dark little boarded chapel within our unfinished church, some eight yards long and nearly five broad; on either side whereof, was a narrow door of entrance for such as came hither for devotion or offering. A full sweet perfume was ever kept burning therein, and it had no light but that which the illumined tapers flashed upon the silver, gold, jewels, and rich images, that glistened at the high altar by the Virgin's effigy; beside which stood brother Hugh Blyford, the keeper of that chapel,* in his canon's black and white habit, to receive such other gifts as should be made unto it. Men might in truth have thought that place the seat of the saints; and I may not describe the lustrous radiance which surrounded it, from the precious gems heretofore brought unto the shrine, by such as made offering of their wealth unto the blessed Virgin and her Son, as the holy kings of old did at the nativity at Bethlehem. Truly rare and beauteous were these jewels, from the rubies and amethysts wherewith the effigy was

* This officer is mentioned by Blomefield in his History of Norfolk, where it is also stated that he was buried in the chapel he served in 1534. The unfinished state of Walsingham Abbey Church is noticed by Erasmus, who visited it about the period referred to in the text: he states that the doors and windows were all open, and that the wind blew through the building.

crowned, unto the wondrous stone at its feet, which they of France do call a *crapaudine*, or toadstone; because the living creature never showed itself more plainly, than it was therein expressed.

Nor were our holier treasures forgotten, such as those sacred reliques and marvellous things which we enjoyed by special favour of the Virgin; they being set forth in the most honourable wise. Of these were a portion of the milk of our Lady, and the blood of our Lord, each being kept from every profane touch in crystal glasses at the high-altar. Such were also that miraculous wicket-gate of the which I have before spoken; and two blessed wells filled with wondrous cold water, from a spring that suddenly burst out of the ground at command of the holy Virgin, of great virtue in curing pains in men's bodies. These fountains have since been defiled, but at this time they might be seen unpolluted, covered over by that no less marvellous house, more hallowed than any which mortal hand hath been employed to raise, seeing that it was brought through the air, many ages before, in the season of mid-winter, when all things were buried in the snow, and placed, where it long stood, over against the little chapel holding the Virgin's effigy. A fine green path led unto it, made specially for pilgrims, and a cross stood by, whereat they might kneel and inwardly pray whiles they drank of the waters.

It was from the little town of North-Basham, two miles distant, that Henry came unto Walsingham, along that most fair and ancient road.

which King Richard II., in his eighth year,—1384-85,—did grant a patent for making unto the Virgin's chapel. Right good care had been taken to consult the truest records of the olden times, to know, by ancient precedent, how we should receive the royal pilgrim. He came at length, habited in lowly garb, like any Jerusalemite, with scarf, scrip, and bourdon-staff; covered about with a long, white, and rough, *sclavina* or robe; and a great hat of skin turned up above his visage: his feet were bare, but I ween it was small penance so to walk, over the soft green-sward which led unto the chapel at Walsingham. Moreover, Henry was attended herein by many of his nobles, and his guard going round him on all sides to keep off the press: but albeit he was in so mean a habit, and they were clothed in their wonted bravery, yet were all uncovered save himself, and the king also had a bold step and lofty air, which even in this journey he might not hide, and which showed him to be the chiefest of all the company. Our prior and his canons in their order, met him at our Lady's Mount of Joy, where the stone cross was set up, and where the pilgrims unto this shrine were anciently wont to rest in sight of the end of their travel; and there we gave him to drink of our wondrous well. When he had knelt and prayed awhile in that place, he was brought into the church and little chapel, and approached the effigy of our lady with exceeding reverence, so that all who saw him deemed him to be full of grace, and a true lover of the holy church; and his offering was indeed well worthy of the king

of England, being a great and rich collar of balas-rubies, most beauteous to be behold.

But, ah me! how little can we blinded mortals deem of the future, by that which we look upon of the present; for how might some of us who thus witnessed Henry's unlooked-for act of piety, think that, long ere our mortal course was run, he should become the fiercest enemy and subverter of those very shrines and monasteries which he now so deeply venerated. And, yet farther, how might the mind of man ever conceive, that the self-same effigy which was then so gloriously bedecked, and which the king approached so reverently to adorn yet more with his own princely gift, should, even at his command, be despoiled of all its treasures; violently torn down from the altar where it had so long stood; and, at last, be defiled and openly burned at Chelsea, in the stormy year of 1539, with such foul scoffings and revilings, that truly my pen refuseth to record them?

But beside King Henry, there was at this time a certain other pilgrim came unto Walsingham with a devout offering; the same being one Peter Blount, an ancient goldsmith of good fame, who had long dwelled in Lombard-street, in the city of London, but was now removed unto Norwich: and when the king had left the altar, he came forward thereunto, in far less state, albeit little less to the pleasure of our brotherhood. He presented himself at our shrine, because he deemed it good for his soul's health to bring thither certain gifts; having, as he said, long purposed to make such disposition of some part of his substance, in

hope that the intercession of our Lady and the prayers of her servants, might blot out the sins of his youthful years, and his too-anxious desires and fraudful endeavours after riches in his later life. By this act he looked to quiet the loud voice of his conscience, which had been suddenly awakened in a shrewd fit of sickness at Dartford, what time he was travelling from Calais towards his home; the which distemper had well nigh given him unto the grave, but that he was cured by the gentle care and leech-like skill of the Austin-nuns of St. Mary and St. Margaret's Priory there. He did then vow, to go hereafter upon his present pilgrimage; and also to carry certain other gifts unto Dartford, especially a great waxen taper of his own height, to be burned at the high-altar in memory of his cure.* His offering at Walsingham was a golden cup, skilfully chased with the most lively effigies of Christ, the Virgin, and the apostles, and the martyrdom of the Saints Stephen and Bartholomew; whereunto he added 500 marks of gold,—£333. 6*s.* 8*d.*—to be bestowed in alms, and for the support of our monastery.

Our prior failed not greatly to thank and to

* These offerings were called statual tapers; and the *Histoire de Paris* states that after the battle of Poictiers, on the capture of John, king of France, a taper was placed before the Virgin's altar, in the church of Nôtre Dame, which was said to be equal to the circumference of Paris; it was rolled round the circle of a wheel, and burned without ceasing. In some cases these waxen gifts were made like effigies, of the height, form, and weight of the person represented; and figures of sick or refractory animals, were sometimes sent to shrines for their recovery.

commend Master Blount for his devotion and charity, wherein he had rightly followed the command of our Lord, in the Gospel, "*Facite vobis amicos de Mammona iniquitatis*," make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity; and farther declared, that he had been right wise in delaying no longer to gain him that quiet of mind which he would assuredly receive from perfecting so pious a vow. The goldsmith replied unto this, that the lord prior had well said, for that when worn by care, or toil, or the coming infirmities of old age, he ofttimes thought that his good intent would at last be too late for his rest hereafter; and that, peradventure, he might be called away from earth ere he found space to perform it at all.

"And well I ween, good friend," responded the prior, "that all men have great cause to think and act as thou hast done; for our mortal bodies be like unto buildings, which yearly, and daily, and hourly, are being taken down, or are falling into decay. But how soon the ruin shall be finished, we know not; and therefore it becometh us at once to do that which we would perform, and to mark well what our Lord hath said, '*Vigilate, itaque, quia nescitis diem neque horam:*' watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour."—The prior added hereunto, with wondrous prudence and gravity, though, as methought with somewhat of dishonest covetise,—that, seeing the goldsmith was now far advanced in years, and it was a full long and toilsome journey unto Dartford;—peradventure it should tend as much unto his weal hereafter, if he should add that which he designed for the sisterhood there,

unto the gifts he had already made unto our house and shrine. Yet, natheless, did our superior say, if Master Blount did still persist in his first intent of bestowing aught at Dartford, it should be carried thither for him; if not by the prior in person, yet by some safe and speedy messenger: for, that although the goldsmith had once vowed to go thither himself, yet might he be absolved therefrom by reason of his infirmity, upon sending his offering and journeying thither in spirit.

This courteous offer was gladly received by the goldsmith, and this course being concluded on, he departed from Walsingham well satisfied at having performed both his vows and offerings with such easy labour. Howbeit, some weeks passed away, ere we received Master Blount's waxen taper and other gifts for the Dartford nuns; but then did it become matter of debate in the chapter as to the messengers who should be sent with the same: and it was at last resolved that they should be intrusted unto Father George Gisborough, some time sub-prior of our house, and myself. He, I do hope and believe, is now with God; albeit he died by the late King Henry's command, as did many other pious men, for not acknowledging his supremacy over the church, and not consenting to surrender unto him our abbey and monastery.

For mine own part, albeit there was much honour in the appointment of my brethren, and I scrupled not to go forth at their call, long and toilsome as the journey might be, yet was it not an employ which I did at all covet. For, beside that I felt no desire to look again upon the world,

I knew that I could not travel through London without the painfullest memory of the days that were gone, and of my former dreams of love and the Lady Bride; the which, though now resigned for ever, were, nevertheless, still much too dear unto me. Howbeit, I addressed me to the journey, but all this did I feel in travelling into Kent through Southwark, as I saw the distant towers of Bermondsey Abbey, and bethought me of our last strange and fatal interview therein, with all the chances which had since followed. Yet, notwithstanding these most sad remembrances, I paused not, but with my companions kept forward unto Dartford with all the speed we might; and, within seven days, we arrived at that most fair convent of Austin-nuns, which the piety of the third King Edward of England founded and dedicated unto the holy Saints Mary and Magaret. It was now, as I do full well remember, the eve of the Feast of St. Martin, Tuesday, the 10th day of November, about the hour of *Nones*, and one of the fairest and brightest days which the departing year could show, being like its last smile cast upon the coming winter, or the glad tranquillity of a saint looking upon approaching death.

I was much rejoiced, at thus seeing our long and wearisome journey of nearly 130 miles, brought unto its conclusion; and I may not conceal that I also felt somewhat of worldly pride and pleasure, in looking forward unto the honourable welcome we should receive, from being the bearers of such costly gifts and good tidings unto the convent. But when we declared our names and mission unto an ancient nun at the gate, and thereupon desired to see the lady prioress, I felt

both anger and amaze at finding none such joyous greeting as I had looked to meet; for sad and solemn were the countenances of all whom I beheld, and brief and gloomy were their answers unto our gladsome salutations. Howbeit, full soon were we told that the prioress of that house, who was much beloved and reverenced of all for her gentleness, piety, many virtues, and various excellent gifts, was even then lying sick unto death; having for a long space languished under a wasting fever, which was now known to be mortal, her last hour being near at hand. I ween that these were in sooth melancholy tidings, yet did I know well that much of the body's sorrows might be cured, by cheering and giving joy unto the heart; and thereupon I did entreat, that the lady prioress should forthwith be told of the costly gifts sent unto her house, by the hands of the sub-prior of Walsingham and brother Richardus of Ely; and in this would I not be gainsaid, because of the great good which I looked to rise therefrom, though some doubted whether it might not be altogether too much for her weakened frame. But presently it was shown that I had not erred in this counsel; for the *formaria*, or over-seeing nun, who had told her thereof, came suddenly back, and said that, upon hearing our mission, her dim and closing eyes became suddenly opened and lighted up. She gave unto us great thanks for coming in such happy time to shed comfort upon her parting hours; and she added that, as we were of the same order as her own convent, she would now make her confession, desiring that one of us should forthwith attend her to receive it, and

entreating all our prayers for her safe passage, in that most solemn change which she well knew was now close at hand.

The aged sub-prior, my companion, did hereupon request and direct me to take the confession of the lady prioress, adding that he would remain to see the gifts safely bestowed in the convent-sacristy; and I therefore followed the weeping nun with much solemnity and sorrow. And now did I feel all mine own spiritual weakness and unworthiness, and lamented, with unfeigned humility, that my learning and piety were no greater, and that my former life had not better fitted me for the duty which I was now about to perform; of aiding, by my ghostly counsel, one renowned for her holiness, in the very moment when she was called unto her everlasting home.

On passing into her presence, I beheld her resting back upon a little couch, for so great were the pains of her disease, that for many days she had been unable to lie down thereon: yet distressed with pain, as in truth she was, she uttered no voice of complaint, so that there was a death-like stillness in the chamber, and I drew in my breath from reverence. The light of that fair day, too, was also shaded therein with a fitting gloom, so that I might not at first see the pale cheek and heavenly look of the dying sufferer; but on advancing unto her more closely,—Saints and Angels!—I saw that she was the LADY BRIDE PLANTAGENET!

CHAPTER X.

A SCENE OF PARTING IN THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

Yet do I live? Oh! how shall I sustain
This vast unutterable weight of wo?
This worse than hunger, poverty, or pain,
Or all the complicated ills below;
She, in whose life my hopes were treasured all
Is gone!—for ever fled!
These eyes, these tear-swoln eyes, beheld her fall!
Ah, no!—she lives on some far-happier shore,
She lives,—but, cruel thought, she lives for me no more!
* * * * *
How shall I ere forget that dreadful hour,
When feeling death's resistless power,
My hand she press'd wet with her falling tears,
And thus in faltering accents spake her fears!

SHAW'S MONODY.

Oh Memory!—Memory!—I ween that I have full little cause to summon thine aid, to depict the scene which was now about to open unto me; for so deeply, yea, so indelibly, are all the events of that most sad hour impressed upon my soul, that they can never be absent from me whilst breath and sense be left unto my mortal frame! —And if aught of earthly affection or sorrow can call forth the tear of human compassion; or if there be indeed a chord in the breasts of others which, like-tuned unto that within mine own, will respond unto the like touch,—then may my feel-

ings at this time be somewhat conceived of; and it will in sooth be deemed that I underwent no common trial. And if, perchance, in the deep sorrow thereof, my reason or devotion bent in the unequal struggle, I well trust that He, who is all strength, and who knoweth the weakness of his creatures, did both pity and forgive it.

In mine earlier years I had sometimes beheld young and noble beauty, with all that wondrous rapture which the poets have affirmed it doth ever inspire; and in the countless charms of dazzling eyes, shining hair, the white ivory gates within the lips, and cheek of fairest rose-colour, I have ofttimes thought that I looked upon all the richest creations of nature, blended in a most rare masterpiece. And, although it was not my fortune to be mated with one of these most lovely beings, I have noted, not with envy, but with a fervent, yet secret, desire for the like happiness,—that woman is, unto our race, the sweetest partner in joy, and the kindest soother in sorrow. For her smiles do ever throw their fair and beaming light, over that which had else been most mournful, desolate, or void of life; and, when the storm of sorrow hath passed away, she appeared unto me like the bow in the brightening sky, the living security of God's everlasting covenant of goodness unto man. Yet do I well deem, that not all the blaze of beauty in its gayest and most blooming hour, did ever seem unto my view so rich and glorious, as did the calm, though fading, features of the dying Lady Bride, before whom I now stood. Albeit her cheek was full pale from

sickness, yet all that pure dignity which so marked her youth still remained; with which were sweetly pictured suffering fortitude, resignation unto the will of God, and Christian benevolence unto all on earth.

This unconquerable yet gentle spirit seemed unto me to cast the semblance of an unearthly triumph over the scene of mortality; and so much did she then appear above the common weakness of our nature, that methought she might well have said for herself,—if indeed ever child of earth might utter the holy apostles' exulting speech,—"Oh Death! where is thy sting?—Oh Grave! where is thy victory?"

When I approached the prioress, as I have afore recounted, with much amaze and a tremulous voice I gave unto her my bendiction; but as one of the nuns was then engaged in ministering a medicine unto her, the pause gave unto me time to regain somewhat of my tranquillity. To one who had been so long schooled by danger ever to wear a cautious guise unto the world, and had been taught by holier wisdom the frailty of all earthly affections, I ween that it asked but brief time and little effort to assume the semblance of calmness, albeit full great was the tumult of mine agitated spirit within. For, I bethought me that, perchance, she might have no memory of me now; so that I should lose the sweet communion with her which I had already begun to hope for: and, although I might disclose myself in the secrecy of confession, I did much doubt whether it would not in truth be profaning her purified spirit in its flight towards heaven, to break upon its holy

repose with aught of the unquiet passions or vain desires of a mortal.

But notwithstanding these inward struggles, I was outwardly tranquil, and the Lady Bride was not less so; albeit speech seemed scarcely wanting to make me known unto her, for the first glance which she cast upon me, though it was but for a moment, declared full surely that she well remembered him whom she then beheld. Yet, natheless, her look had much of amazement, doubt, and even blame, but these were soon exchanged for her wonted gentleness, and her visage again returned unto its calm sweetness; for albeit my name might sound familiar to her ear, yet did she much marvel to see me in that garb and place. She even doubted if her sense served her truly, and, when convinced that she really beheld me, she would have reproved my coming thus as an artful device; but anon she yielded unto the words of truth, and rejoiced greatly to see one whom she had so long known, like herself withdrawn from the world unto an holy retirement. Howbeit she did promply restrain her surprise at seeing me, and gave direction unto her handmaid with the *discretæ*, or attendant nuns, who until now had awaited in the chamber, that they should go forth awhile; for, said she, "I would speak with this holy man alone, since I have much to impart unto him, and more than is meet to be heard by others than himself. Therefore withdraw, my daughters, for a space, yet still remain so near at hand, as to answer upon brief summons."

Hereupon the sisters withdrew, and I was left alone with the prioress; the which when she saw

she said unto me in a faint, yet solemn, voice, "Is this, in truth, good Richard, God's mercy unto his fainting servant, to behold thee in such a habit and in such a moment? or are they but a feigned garb and mission wherein thou hast come hither, again to seek speech with me, having learned the place of my retreat? Yet forgive me, if, for a moment, I seem to doubt thee wrongfully."

Unto this I answered, "Never believe it, Lady, that I could become so profane an impostor; and in sooth, I have certain of our monastery with me who can well testify that I am no other than what I do seem: and that I have, for these seven years past, been one of that brotherhood in whose habit I am now clothed."

"This is indeed great and holy consolation!" hereupon exclaimed the prioress, her eyes glistening with triumph and joy, and looking fervently upward unto that heaven whereto she herself was hastening. "These are truly joyful tidings, Richard; for my soul seeketh to be glad in thy salvation, which hath heretofore been much disquieted by misgivings touching thy temporal and spiritual welfare; but now do I trust, that in good hour thou wilt follow me, unto that blessed land where I hope to be before the sun sets on earth, and where the rays of his glory do never go down.

The Lady Bride's fervent desires after my soul's happiness, and her solemn, though joyful and triumphant look unto present death, called forth such a sudden flood of sweet sorrow within my bosom, that it altogether unmanned me; and, taking her thin white hand, I cast me at her feet, as

almost worshipping one who seemed so much divine. If I erred herein, it was unwittingly and without intent, for in truth I beheld nothing earthly in her, and so bowed me unto the heavenly reflection in her visage. I thought, I only gazed upon the departing saint; and if the church's favour be bestowed upon those, who devoutly journey unto the shrines of the glorified servants of God, it seemeth unto me that my sin was only in *anticipating* the reverence which should be hereafter paid unto one, who, though now an inhabitant of earth, was so soon to be translated unto the skies. Howbeit, the thought of her speedy death filled my soul with sadness, and I ventured to say that, peradventure, it might not yet be so near as she deemed it.

"If thou desirest my happiness, Richard," fervently responded the dying prioress, "cause me not to think so: for my human weakness delights it with the belief that, as this is the eve of St. Martin, when I was born unto this world of sin, and when I was professed and consecrated unto a religious life, so it shall behold my new birth into the world of glory!"

I could not reply hereunto, from my sorrowful admiration of the blessed creature upon whom I gazed; who, thereupon calling up her swiftly-declining strength, thus continued: "I pray thee, kind friend, rise, since it is not for the confessor to kneel before his penitent."

"Oh, lady!" returned I, "believe me, I cannot refrain therefrom, since it is unto me an hour of much weakness, and this lowly posture doth best

declare the fervour, the devotion, and the sincerity of mine heart."

"Yet, nevertheless, rise and be calm, good Richard," answered the prioress, "whilst I essay to speak unto thee a while. I would now tell thee of certain passages of my life, not, indeed, in shrift, because confessions be ever best given unto Him who fashioneth the heart, and who alone knoweth the sins and secrets thereof. Unto that All-seeing God, therefore, have I already often declared my transgressions with much sorrow; and tears, bitter tears, have been poured over the remembrance of times gone by, and the avowal of feelings which it were sinful to cherish.—— His peace at length came down upon my penitent spirit; and it was no delusion, seeing that its influence was sweet and silent as the summer-dews, and did indeed pass all understanding.—And, therefore, albeit I desired to see a confessor, I have but little to pour into the bosom of the holy church; save gratitude that the lowly plant, which, methinks, would have been blighted by the storms of the world, hath been reared and protected in the garden of God upon earth; and, as my soul trusteth, made fit for blooming still more fairly in His paradise on high."

The prioress paused for a brief space, yet could I utter nought in reply, from amaze at the wondrous grace and eloquence which seemed poured upon her at this hour; and, therefore, it was without speech of mine intervening, that she again continued thus.

"Truly, my friend, I look unto that immortal rest with much hope and gladness; for *here*, as

thou well knowest, I have had mine hours of trial, of temptation, and even of suffering.—Yes, He who guideth His children with a merciful restraint, hath not withheld from me those tokens of His adoption. I have in truth passed through seasons of earthly weakness and wanderings of thought, which woman's heart and tongue would never acknowledge, save in prayer or at the dying hour. And, I have indeed now to confess how my thoughts have been ever too prone to stray unto thee, Plantagenet, and how often mine heart hath panted to know thy fate, and even that I should again behold thee.—This unhoped-for blessing is now given unto me, and he for whom I too often sighed with a mortal's passion, is happily present with me in the hour which closes all my human sorrows, to behold how earthly love, though verily strong as death, can yet be conquered by heavenly grace; and as a true son of the holy church, to aid me with his ghostly counsels, and guide my spirit in its flight."

"Alas! dearest Lady Bride," exclaimed I, with tearful voice, "Alas! I am all unworthy of such a part: and 'tis rather my sad happiness to learn of thee how a Christian should die."

"Be it so, then, good Plantagenet," answered she; "and right glad shall I be to point out the happy road which thou shalt hereafter travel: for I have ever prayed that thou mightest be blessed both in life and death, albeit thy fate was yet unknown unto me; and, perchance, I did so with more fervour than for aught beside. Now, my kindest friend, will I hide it from thee no longer, since we are about to part for ever upon earth; I

will say to thee that I have loved thee but too well, from our meeting at Windsor; and however I did appear to suppress mine affections under the semblance of devotion to the cloister, God and mine own soul well know the trial which I endured, to gain even that seeming victory, whilst thine image remained but all too perfectly in mine heart."

The prioress paused hereat from increasing weakness, yet would she not that I should call in any aid; and, therefore, after remaining silent for a brief space, she again called up her sinking strength, and then spake thus, with wondrous fervency.—"All this, good Richard, was but blighted vanity; but He who wisely withholdeth any unfit desire which his offspring conceive, faileth not, like a kind father, more largely and excellently to requite them for the same. It was not His good pleasure that our lives on earth should glide away together, but He hath given us a far better blessing, inasmuch as He ordained that both should become devoted unto His service, and so be advancing, as it were, side by side, and making them ready for an everlasting union in the world to come!"

Whilst the Lady Bride thus spake, her life seemed suddenly to kindle up within her so brightly and forcefully, that I again deemed her, for a moment, to be less near her end than she believed: but too soon I saw her sinking from the effort which she had made. Yet even in her very decline there were both beauty and dignity; and I could not but liken her to some noble temple, consecrated unto God, which, though fallen into

ruins from the wasting hand of time, or shaken unto its very base by an overwhelming earthquake, did still show both fair and stately, even whilst its dome was trembling and its columns fell.—After another short pause the prioress again addressed me, albeit her speech was often broken by sad swoonings which might not be restrained. She told me that, after we last parted, she remained but short space at Bermondsey, and then was suddenly removed, yet with her own consent, unto the convent at Dartford, where she was consecrated a nun on the return of her birthday; of which place she was at length elected prioress, and so had remained until the day whereon we met.

"In carefully acquitting me of the duties of that holy office," continued she, "I found the greatest delight which my wounded spirit might know: for albeit my thoughts would oftentimes wander from this hallowed house, yet was it not unto a world of glittering vanity, nor unto scenes of heedless laughter or tumultuous joy,—but unto one beloved fellow-creature, whose temporal welfare I knew was in much hazard, and whose everlasting safety I deemed might also be unsecured. At length, Richard, I heard of the fire at Sheen Palace, whither it had been told me that thou wert conveyed, wherein it was said that many of the inmates were destroyed, and I did long deem that thou wert one of them, seeing that thy life was cared for by none; but afterward came that which I thought to be more certain tidings of thy death, when the boat which carried thee unto a more perilous prison was whelmed at London

bridge, and all on board drowned, even thy mantle being found torn and floating on the water. It is true that somewhat whispered me of thy possible escape, and prudence in thus casting away thine habit; and, therefore, my daily prayers were made for thee whether living or dead. And this day, upon hearing thy well-known name, the same hope told me that it might indeed be thee; yet did I not dare specially to summon thee, lest mine earthly love should triumph, albeit I was full fain to behold thee once more, and to conjure thee to hasten after me on the road to blessedness!"

Having thus spoken, with many interruptions of extreme weakness, the prioress sank back upon her couch, as if all exhausted of living strength and nigh unto death. In this state of rapid decay, I gazed upon her with the same ravishment at her fervent piety, as I had before done in beholding her beauty. For now the whole course of her thoughts did appear unto me so truly to accord with those which faith should inspire in the soul, that the brightness and tranquillity of her passage from time unto eternity, the beauty of her departure from life here unto immortality hereafter, seemed in lively picture to portray unto my mind, how the holy patriarch walked with God and was not; becoming the habitant of heaven, yet without putting off his earthly form.

But albeit the strength of the Lady Bride did appear to be now full swiftly going from her, yet would she not that I should summon her handmaiden, because, she said, she had yet a weighty matter to disclose unto me ere she departed, which

did much concern both her happiness and mine: whereupon she again spake unto me thus, when she had tasted of a cordial and had somewhat recovered her spirit.

"And now, my kind friend Plantagenet, having told thee of mine entrance and tranquil life in this convent, I must add thereunto that, albeit I thought it a full holy and happy place, I soon learned that, since the loss of Eden, there is no true paradise to be found upon earth. After I was elected prioress here, it became my sad duty,—as others told me, and as I deemed right,—to enforce the rigours of our rule against one of our sisterhood, for great transgression against the church; she being accused in chapter by divers of the nuns, of an unholy attachment unto the heretic writings of Wiclif. And so resolute was she herein, that even unto her last sickness sister Maria remained unchanged, though still pious and happy; and, at length, the book of the New Testament which Wiclif rendered into English, was found concealed beneath her couch, like some hidden treasure. Whereupon I reproved her with harshness, albeit in mine ignorance, with a real abhorrence of the crime whereof she was guilty."

"And herein," answered I, "did you piously perform your duty, and but enforced the rule of which you were the superior."

"Nay, Richard," replied the prioress, most sadly smiling and shaking her head, "hear my story to an end, ere you deem so.—The offending sister sank beneath the rigorous dealing and reproach which I permitted to be used towards her; but albeit I

was less harsh than the chapter and our statutes required me to be, mine heart smote me heavily at the moment it was told me that her life had fled: nevertheless, keener sorrows yet remained in store for me.—The book found in the persecuted nun's cell, I took into mine own keeping, to examine it at fitting season; but although I had often looked upon the gospels in St. Hierome's Latin, I declare unto thee, Plantagenet, that when I set me to read them in our own tongue, they came so suddenly and closely home unto mine heart and conscience, that the one seemed unto me like having a great treasure in a locked casket, and the other like owning it in free and full possession.—Now I felt that it might indeed be good to set forth the book of Christ in the common speech, so that all who run might have the Word of Eternal Life; and that the wayfaring man, though a fool, might read of his road thither.—Upon this, therefore, do I judge that sister Maria had been harshly dealt with by all our house; and especially by me, for that her reviled book had opened my blinded eyes, and hath since been my solace by day and my companion in the night!"

Hereupon did I suddenly start back, it might be a pace or more, at hearing one so fair and beloved as the Lady Bride Plantagenet, and of such exalted piety as the prioress of Dartford, speak in favour of translating the sacred Scriptures, and of the new doctrines and heresies which even then were triumphantly advancing. Mine emotion was not hidden from her who conversed with me, since she soon marked and understood it, and answered unto it thus.

"Be not dismayed, mine ever kind friend Plantagenet, nor deem me in this to have wandered from the path of Christian faith. Rather would I say, do thou also read the gospels of the evangelists, with the deeds of the apostles, as the good preacher of Lutterworth hath rendered them into English, than join in blaming those whose happiness it hath been thus to know them. Why, Richard, why, I pray you, should the unbounded light of Christ be in anywise concealed or shaded unto the eyes of men? or wherefore should we hide from the lowlier children of God, the holy Scriptures, which for them, as well as for us, do in truth contain the words of eternal life? Truly, methinks there may well be urged in this matter, that which holy Peter of old answered unto them that reproached him, saying, 'If God gave the same grace to them, as to us that believeden in the Lord Jesu Christ, who are we that we may forbid the Lord, that He give not the Holy Ghost to them that believeden in the name of Jesu Christ?'"

I may not here set down with what declining life, frequent pausings, and faint speech, the Lady Bride held on throughout this converse, albeit they were so piteous, and her weakness did so greatly increase, as to move me to entreat of her not to discourse farther at that season: whereunto she replied, that the matter of which she spake seemed charged upon her soul to deliver unto me, and that until this was done, she was borne up by a strength which she knew well was far greater than her own. In response, therefore, unto her former words, I noted unto her

what divers holy and venerable men have said upon the *sin*, as they deemed it, of giving the Word of God in the common speech.

Whilst I spake, she sighed heavily, and replied, "Such I do well know hath been the language of many wise men in the church, and often have I blamed mine own desire herein; much fearing that, in coveting to read the Holy Book in English, I sinned like Eve, who first sought to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. Yet, good Richard, have I been most wondrously refreshed and comforted, by the close union which was thus formed between mine own soul and the immortal Word of God; though I was doomed to hide, and even somewhat to discountenance, that which in my secret heart I could not but approve as most excellent. And for such as desire that the Gospel shall *never* be spread abroad in the common tongue, it seemeth unto me that they follow the guileful artifices of the heathens; whose holiest precepts were not given openly, to make mankind virtuous or blessed, but veiled under evil rites, and confined unto their cruel and mysterious priests."

"Oh! dearest Lady Bride," then said I, "not in this most solemn hour, let voice of thine sanction these mad and daring novelties, with which the adversaries of our holy church are even now striving to overthrow it."

"Fear not for me," answered she, as her voice sank lower and her eyes again closed, "Fear not for me,—since I know in whom I have believed." ——Then, after pausing awhile, the prioress again raised herself, and with new and sudden anima-

tion, and a wondrous light on her visage, she continued,—"Thou hast well said, Plantagenet, it is indeed a solemn hour with me, seeing that I am standing between life and death; and, like him who stood upon the top of Pisgah, overlooking both the wilderness of this world and much of the glorious Canaan to which I am hastening. And, perchance, this solemn hour, giveth even unto mortal creatures somewhat of immortal knowledge; since I feel it written upon my soul, that the Lord is about to rise and mightily to refresh the nations with his presence! That a great overthrow is coming upon the corrupted clergy of this realm! That many of our superstitious rites shall wane and die away, in the plain puritives of the advancing Gospel; and that the TRANSLATED WORD shall speedily be spread through this land, from the throne even unto the hovel! For kings shall come unto the brightness of its rising. I depart in the twilight of these things, but you shall behold the sun rise; and I pray that he may shine forth upon you with healing in his wings!"

As the dying prioress spake, I stood and gazed upon her with utter amazement, for unto me she seemed like some holy prophetess, in the very moment when unmeasurable inspiration was poured into her soul; I spake not, from wonder at the power and eloquence of her speech, and I almost doubted to breathe, lest I should interrupt her wondrous discourse.

Howbeit, her strength was now almost spent, and it was in a fainter and more broken voice that she said, "Truly, Plantagenet, even in this last hour of mine existence, I cannot but feel a

full strong assurance, that to make the Word of Truth plainly and widely known, is to spread the power and realm of the Most High; whilst to keep it in an unspoken tongue is to bury the eternal jewel of mankind. For, I beseech you, are all unlettered men to perish because they wist not the speech of heathen Rome? or why should our land be the lowest of Christendom, in that it hath *not* the Scriptures, the law of God, and our faith, in its own language? Oh, Richard! Richard!—friend of the friendless Bride Plantagenet,—who art the dearest object in my closing eyes, believe me when I say, that I desire nothing better for thee than well to know and revere this most holy book in our own tongue. Alas! Plantagenet, my death is so far like that of my beloved mother in Bermondsey Abbey, that I may well say, as she did in her will, I have no worldly goods to do any a pleasure with, nor to reward any according to mine heart and mind. Yet unto thee, most dear friend, do I give this book of the English New Testament, by the learned and holy Wiclif, for such I dare well think him to have been; and this little tome of offices, which thou gavest me at our last parting, and which hath never left me since that hour. I can well think that thou hast preserved my ring, if it have not been rent from thee; and so I ween that I shall not be altogether forgotten by thee."

As she gave the books into mine hands, and spake these words, my spirit was again suddenly melted within me, and I said, "Forgotten! Oh! dearest Lady Bride, when *thou* art forgotten,

Richard Plantagenet will have neither power of memory, nor aught to remember."

"These confessions being past, then," resumed the prioress, "my soul is full of blessed expectancy and ready to be gone; having now nought to sorrow or to hope for, saving that I yet lament mine harshness, or that of mine office, unto one whose feelings I do gladly partake of."

It was my great desire, however much mine heart should be disquieted by the sorrows of the hour, to keep my spirit yet tranquil and unshaken, —but now my tears flowed in despite of all mine efforts to restrain them, and, moreover, my soul was in great dread from the peril which I feared might await the Lady Bride, from her holding what I then deemed most hazardous and evil doctrines. Yet even whilst I did what was in me to recall her therefrom into the bosom of the church, I much wondered at the more than human courage with which she had prepared to encounter the last enemy. For, all throughout mine interview with her, even unto her death, a heavenly hope seemed to flourish healthfully and vigorously upon her countenance; even as I have seen some fair and fallen column, wreathed around with sweet flowers and green moss, and blooming with all the fresh and living verdure of the spring.

But now the hour had arrived, when she was to render up her spirit unto the God who gave it, since she faintly said, "I can no more, Richard; give me thine absolution and benediction,—for the moment hath now arrived when we must part for the last time; and may He, whom I im-

plore mercifully to receive his returning creature—cause His best blessing eternally to descend upon thee,—my brother—and my friend—bringing thee in His own good hour, into His purified fold!—and forget not—that I wait for thee in glory. Call in the sisters, Plantagenet—and fare thee—well!" And as I sorrowfully turned me from her, I heard her add in a low fervent voice, "Lord have mind of me, now Thou art in Thy Kingdom."

Thereupon hastily entered the nuns, with certain others, to give her the viaticum and extreme unction, but she was now so weak that they could do no more than support her, yet did her dying eyes beam upon me with love unutterable. It was now sunset, and at that moment was heard the swell of the organ from the chapel, where even-song was being performed; and then followed the choral voices of those sisters, who owed their advancement in piety unto her most religious care and holy pattern. I ween that all who heard those strains, felt them to be full fitting for the departure of one so blessed into the world of spirits; and I ween that the Lady Bride thought so herself, for when the *nunc dimittis* was heard, she strove to raise herself, and spake somewhat in a voice that might not be understood. The nuns declared it to be the Latin words of the holy Simeon's hymn, but I rather trow that they were those from Wiclif's translation of St. Luke's gospel, seeing that they did refer both unto her readiness to die, and unto the rising light which she had found for herself, and expected for others, in the blessings of the translated gospel.

"LORD, NOW LEEVEST THOU THY SERVANT IN PEACE. FOR MINE EYEN HAN SEYN THINE HEALTH: WHICH THOU HAST MADE READY BEFORE THE FACE OF ALL PEOPLE; LIGHT TO THE SHEWING OF HEATHEN MEN, AND GLORY OF THY PEOPLE ISRAEL!"

Such, I do well believe, were the dying words of the Lady Bride Plantagenet, upon ending the which, she languidly bent her head as if in a last farewell; whereupon one of the nuns signed unto me to withdraw, and so I turned me from that scene of triumph, though of almost more than mortal suffering, and from the face and form I had so long loved to look upon.

I have so often mused over the passages which I have now recounted, that they are all impressed upon my memory with wondrous exactness and power; yet is there one thing, which I may not omit to note, whereof I know not what to say, whether in truth it really chanced, or whether it were but a dream of phantasy, either at the very time, or even in after years. Howbeit, whatever it were, this is the sum thereof.—When I turned to depart from the prioress, I gave her my last adieu and benediction; which she had no power to answer but by a weak motion of her head: but as I was leaving the chamber, methought I again heard her well-known and beloved voice saying, "Farewell, Richard!—Farewell, Plantagenet!" in its saddest and sweetest tones. I started with amaze at hearing her so accost me before strangers, and hastily turned me again, but in doing so, mine eyes chanced to fall upon the casement, whereat methought I heard the soft

fluttering of wings, and I beheld a Dove, more lustrous and silvery white than any which I ever saw upon earth, suddenly fly therefrom into the brightest parts of the heavens where the sun was sinking, and so disappear!—I truth I dare not affirm, that it was the Lady Bride's beatified soul which I did thus see and hear; yet it is certain that she died at the very moment thereof, as I knew from the sudden cry of the sisters, though I continued gazing upon that wondrous vision, until they recalled me by noting the intenseness wherewith I was looking upon that, which appeared to them but as an empty space!

I then turned me once more unto the couch of the departed prioress, to behold her dear countenance for the last time; wherein I saw there was but little change from dying. For the brightness of unshaken faith and unspotted virtue were upon it, which made her last moments wondrously radiant; even as the sun never looketh more glorious, than when his parting rays are cast upward unto the mountain's summit, as he sinketh to his rest upon the glowing bosom of the western wave.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECLUSE'S LAST SORROWS AND TRIALS—THE DISSOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS HOUSES.

He who hath bent him o'er the dead
Ere the first day of Death is fled,—
Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers.
And mark'd the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there,
The fix'd, yet tender, tints that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,
And—but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now,
And, but for that chill changeless brow:
Where cold Obstruction's apathy
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,—
Yes,—but for these, and these alone,
Some moments, ay one treacherous hour
He still might doubt the Tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly seal'd,
The first, last look by Death reveal'd.

LORD BYRON.

AND THERE SHALL COME A KING and confesse your Religions,
And bete you, as the Bible telleth, for breaking of your Rule.
And amende Moniales, Monkes, and Chanoines;—
And then shall the Abbot of England, and all his issue for ever,
HAVE A KNOCKE OF A KING, AND INCURABLE SHALL BE THE WOUNDE!

PROPHECY IN THE VISION OF PIERCE PLOUGHMAN.

It is full sad and sweet to look upon the mortal remains of one whom in life we were wont to admire and to love: it is full sad to think how that

countenance, which was of late so rich in beauty and lively emotion, and how those eyes which glistened so lustrously, and the tongue which could discourse with highest wisdom or with holiest eloquence,—have all become the prey of death, and are for ever dark, motionless, and mute. Yet, I ween, that amidst all the kindly lamentations which sorrow wakeneth at such a moment, it is also full soothing to mark the quiet rest, which the happily-parted dead do seem already to partake of; even in the brief space ere we note that the loathly work of decay is advancing, or the worm beginneth to revel upon the charms of his fallen victim.

All this did I feel, full sadly and truly, at that solemn hour, when it was mine to gaze upon the lifeless form and visage of the departed Lady Bride. But though I did much lament me that one so pious, and noble, and beauteous, should fall thus early into the sepulchre; yet could I not look upon that which she had left of her mortality, without thinking that she had but the sooner retreated unto an holy and blessed rest; and that, with such hopes as hers, it was, in truth, happiness thus speedily to have crossed over the troubled sea of life, and to have gained the eternal shores of the world beyond it.—And I do well trust that God can bear me witness, that my pious and hopeful musings at this time, have not in any sort been altered by aught which has since chanced; albeit I once thought that it would have been happy for me had I also arrived at mine appointed resting-place, ere I had counted another year beyond the Lady Bride's death: yet can I now well see the

vanity and folly of my wish; that length of days, sorrowful as many of them have proved, hath been given unto me for a purpose of good; and that it is not for the vessel of clay to strive with him who frameth it, nor for man to question the decree of his Maker:—in brief, whatever may be his yearnings after his immortal change, that he should patiently finish his appointed day, saying, "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

I will not now recount aught of the last rites which were rendered unto the departed prioress, albeit until the tomb was closed over her I lingered at the convent with my fellows, and even took a melancholy part in singing for her the mass for the dead, and seeing her most honourably interred in the chapel. I was in truth a most sorrowful mourner, for I did ever greatly desire to descend with her unto the tomb; being full sad, and even dismayed, when I bethought me how long the years might be which should pass away before that we should meet again.

Yet until the day when the Lady Bride thus became numbered with the dead, I was, in truth, less weaned from the vain hopes of this world than might become one of the holy life whereunto I had professed myself; since, albeit I had much desired to put them from my thoughts, yet in despite of me they would ever and anon turn unto her, whose sway over mine heart had alway been most wondrous. Waking dreams, moreover, were wont to spring up in my mind, as it were in very mockery of my better reason, and featly to shadow forth what strange chances might arise to restore me unto the world, raise me

unto loftiest rank and power,—perchance unto a throne,—and more than all, give the Lady Bride unto my love. Nevertheless, much did I strive to overcome these lurking visions of vanity, although mine efforts were not seldom in vain; and mortal affections too often withdrew my thoughts and desires from heaven. But now a sudden and a solemn change had passed over the fashion of my life, and the dearest object of my fondest and wildest wishes was withdrawn for ever; so that for me the whole world no longer possessed aught, which might interrupt meditations more befitting unto my profession and character. Mortality and vanity had been stamped in fearful characters upon all I held noblest, or sweetest, or loveliest; and I was now no longer to be allured by the fairest prospects of fame, or joy, or riches, which the earth might offer.

After our return unto Walsingham, my life passed like the still and silent waters of the Dead Sea, in a sad, yet peaceful, course of unchanging religious offices and duties, the which I had neither desire nor temptation to break; so that days, and months, and years rolled by me almost unknown. Nevertheless, I failed not to mark the return of the day when the Lady Bride was born and became beatified, by a yearly pilgrimage unto her tomb, and offering my most fervent prayers for her soul's health. At these seasons, moreover, I did rejoice that, by their succession, they did ever advance me nearer and nearer unto eternity, which I deemed could alone fill up the desolate void within my soul: that eternity, which, however fearful it seemeth unto mortals

in their lusty youth, the faint and wornout traveller full greatly desireth to reach, as a refuge and a home.

I trow well, moreover, that the tidings, which from time to time I heard of the world, were not such as to make me greatly desire that my stay herein should be prolonged; since in truth I weened that the last days were now come, as foretold by the holy 'postles, Peter and Powle, wherein scoffers should appear walking after their own lusts. At this time began many to mock at the faith of the church of Rome, from the questioning about the Pope's indulgences, begun by that learned and ardent young doctor, Martin Luther, in the church of Wittemburg in Almaine, on the 31st day of October in the year 1517: for albeit divers papal constitutions had openly condemned the shameless sale of those remissions from the earthly penalties of sin, which the pontiffs were wont to grant unto such as confessed them, and joined in the crusades, or gave money therunto, or did any acts of Christian charity;—yet had those decrees been too often disregarded, and indulgences were not seldom made the means of gathering ungodly lucre, for the fostering of covetise, or of aiding unlawful ambition and desire of rule. In especial, they were at this time published and sold at Poland and France, and the northern parts of Germany, to aid in the building of that most gorgeous church of St. Peter at Rome, the which, though it is now full thirty-five years since it was begun, is not yet brought unto perfection. Howbeit, for the gathering of these moneys in Almaine, the Pope's indulgences were

offered not only in sermons from the pulpits, but were also sold in streets and markets, taverns and private houses; whilst it was affirmed that all who bought them, profligate as they might be, did either open the gate of heaven for themselves, or forthwith released a departed soul from the pains of purgatory. If this were true, it were indeed foul and daring impiety, to think that any mortal should have power to buy off the righteous sentence of an incorruptible and eternal Judge; yet some men do say that it was not so, but that Luther's preaching against the same, arose out of the counsels of one Staupitz, Vicar of the Austin-Friars, and the jealousy which was between that order and the Dominicans. Howbeit, whatever it were, now began that reformation in the Christian church, which, I question not that He, who bringeth good out of evil, and light out of darkness, and who maketh even the wrath of man to praise Him,—will at length work out and establish unto His own glory.

I will not here relate more of the hazardous, though triumphant, march and labours of Luther, to bring about this mighty work, nor how he went on from questioning the pope's indulgences to doubt of his doctrines, and thence to the unlearned and vicious lives of the clergy; the which were but all too well known, both in our own realm and in the country of Almaine. And indeed the increase and fatal end of the ignorance and evil deeds of our English monks, had full long since been foretold; and it was mine to see their overthrow fulfilled, and even in some degree to partake thereof. For the Venerable Bede wondrously

spake of it, full 800 years before it came to pass, in his pious and learned letter on the state of the church in his days;* and the wise, yet biting verses, of that shrewd priest, Robert Langlande, in his book of the *Visions of Pierce Ploughman*, noted the same in such full and plain words, that men might well deem that they were written after the act was done, were not certain copies yet to be seen with his prophecy to be found therein. There were divers others, too, who foresaw this overthrow ere it came, of the which I speak not now, saving to note the wondrous reve-

* This epistle is supposed to have been the very last of Bede's writings, and was probably composed in A. D. 735. It is particularly remarkable for advising the suppression of some of the English religious houses for the establishment and support of new bishoprics, as being more beneficial to the church: and because many of the former institutions fell far short of their rules, whilst others were serviceable to neither God nor the commonwealth; the exercises of piety and discipline not being practised in them, nor their estates held by such as would defend the country. Part of the prophecy from the visions of Pierce Ploughman above referred to, will be found prefixed to the present chapter; this remarkable passage is contained in the sixth division of the poem, and is inserted in manuscripts which are older than the year 1400. Dr. Whittaker, in his edition of that most extraordinary composition from a contemporary manuscript, gives the passage somewhat different, though equally full, but he considers it as no other than a happy conjecture. These visions are ascertained to have been written after, or during, the year 1362; and though they are generally attributed to Robert Langlande, it is thought that the best MSS., as well as some passages in the poem itself, state the author's name to have been William. It was first printed in 1550. Pierce the Ploughman's crede, which had been cited in a former part of this volume, is an imitation of the visions, though by a different hand, and was written after the death of Wiclif in 1384. It was first printed in 1553.

lation thereof, which was poured upon the dying eyes of the Lady Bride Plantagenet, as I have already recounted the same.

Nevertheless, all men do well know, that it was not presently, nor for almost twenty years, after Luther's preaching, that the pope's power and the monks were overthrown in this realm; for Henry in his youth was well seen in divinity, and wrote much against the new doctrines; whereupon the pontiff, in 1524, gave unto him the lofty title of Defender of the Faith. But some seven years thereafter, when he first began to desire a new consort, and to question the lawfulness of his marriage with the good queen Catherine, then might all men see that the storm was hastening on. First fell the great and wise cardinal Wolsey, then followed the king's divorce, and anon, to the fearful amaze of all who yet owned the pope's authority, Henry was declared supreme head of the church; rashly, as I then thought, attacking the vicegerent of heaven, and setting at nought his holy power derived from St. Peter, through a long line of pontiffs who had gloriously ruled over the Christian world. They who adhered unto him and the faith he taught, and denied the civil power of the parliament to give unto Henry a spiritual sovereignty, then became meet objects of persecution, and divers fell victims thereunto; especially, as I remember me, the three Carthusian priors of London, Axiholm, and Belleyse, with certain others, in the year 1535: the which were full soon followed by the wise and good doctor John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, and the

late high-chancellor, the very witty and learned Sir Thomas More.

The tempest which we looked for did now soon burst, and descend upon the religious houses of the realm, as being the peculiar subjects of the bishop of Rome: for when the pope excommunicated Henry, the dissolution of monasteries was forthwith resolved on, and their general visitation began by divers commissioners, appointed by the lord Cromwell, the king's vicar-general. Yet unto such as foresaw not the end of this device, it seemed rather the *support* or *amendment*, than the *abolition*, of monasteries which was now sought; for the instructions of the said visiters were little different, from those which have ever been set forth by bishops or papal legates in their wonted visitations. But the commissioners, I trow, were also commanded first to go unto the less religious houses, and exhort the inmates thereof presently to yield them unto the king; upon failure of which, they were to seek occasion for their sudden suppression by inquiring into their misdeeds. Howbeit, at this time only seven houses resigned; and it was shown that most of the evil charged upon the monks, was to be found in the smaller brotherhoods and convents only.

So was the work of destruction begun, but in March in the next year, namely, 1536, the king devised a speedier means of proceeding against them; for a bill was suddenly sent unto the parliament, that all monasteries which owned not two hundred pounds in a clear yearly value, should be given unto the king. But this bill, as Henry thought, stuck too long with the commons; wherefore he

sent for certain of them, and told them that he would have some of their heads, unless it were enacted forthwith, and so it was suddenly done. Commissioners were thereupon sent unto all such houses, briefly to declare their dissolution, to make an inventory of their goods, to seize upon their seals and charters, and to dispose of the societies: although, as the aforesaid bill left the king free to refound those houses, each one hoped to escape from utter destruction, by gifts or pensions made unto the vicar-general and his deputies, to buy their favour and secure their own safety; by the which means, many were for a brief space respited or new-founded.

Howbeit this act, after all, touched not the greater monasteries, nor the abbey of Walsingham; yet our house well devised what would succeed, since this provision was like a small broche wherewith men make a little hole, to put in afterwards a larger auger. And even as we expected, so did it soon follow; for the dissolution of the smaller monasteries having brought on a notable insurrection on their behalf in the northern counties, by divers of the commonalty who missed their alms and other charities,—certain of the greater religious houses were charged with aiding and abetting the same, and so it was resolved at once to suppress them.

These were some of the public passages of this most disquiet time, but now come I to note mine own particular, and hapless, concern therein. Upon the king's declaration of his supremacy over the church, Richard Vowell, our prior, Edmund Warham, the then sub-prior, and twenty canons,

subscribed unto it on Friday, the 18th of September, in the year 1534. But though this was received as the act of all our house, yet did not the whole brotherhood sign the same: for Father George Gisborough, of whom I have afore spoken, and divers others denied it; and for mine own part, I was then, by order of the prior, at Flitcham, a cell belonging unto our abbey, some fifteen miles distant. So passed I unquestioned in that matter, but sixteen of my resisting brethren were long and cruelly imprisoned, and five of them were hanged for high treason in 1536. And in their sad fate did I full well deem that I beheld mine own, what time it was determined to rid Walsingham Abbey of its canons, and leave the same at the king's pleasure; the which was brought about in this manner.

In July, soon after the Feast of Pentecost, in the thirtieth year of Henry VIII., namely 1538, certain commissioners came unto our house to make visitation, the chief thereof being Sir Richard Southwell. They assayed divers devices to effect their end, by separate and secret examinations both of the brethren and servitors; but first they so wrought with our prior, that they made him of a very facile and ready mind to follow their counsel in this matter, and surrender his monastery unto the king or his assigns; for the which service he did soon after receive a pension of £100 yearly, and, peradventure, doth still enjoy the same. He did then forthwith propound Henry's desire unto us in full chapter, and read a deed which had been given unto him to sign, declaring the misorder and evil rule of the brethren

of the abbey, both unto God and the king, which constrained him to give it up. Furthermore, he counselled us to join him herein, assuring us of pensions or advancement in the church, for so doing, and showing us that it was altogether vain to withstand the sovereign's commandment. The tidings of this guerdon had much weight with divers of my fellows, who were in truth worldly and evil men, unfitted for a monastic life; and, therefore, did they yield unto the prior's counsel, and subscribed the said deed, for the which they received certain pensions, from forty shillings to nine marks yearly.

Thus was the noted abbey of Walsingham, with Flitcham cell, given up unto the king, by a brief writ in Latin, enrolled in the chancery, and bearing date on Friday, the 4th of August; but thereunto was added a most shameful and dishonest confession in English, and so I was resolved to set mine hand unto neither, let the bribes or the consequences be what they might. The said declaration set forth that we, and others of our *pretensed* religion, had long time used divers papistical ceremonies; such as wearing of scapulars and hoods, black and white garments, with vain dockying and becking, and diguising ourselves after strange fashions, the which belonged not unto Christian living. Moreover, it was affirmed therein, that we had been guilty of much profane fraud touching the miracles and supposed holy reliques of our shrine, and that we led notorious lewd and incontinent lives in our abbey; for the which we yielded up all unto the king's pleasure, and resolved to live in future more according to

the examples of the Evangelists and Apostles. Now much of this confession did I utterly deny and scorn: and being closely questioned thereupon by Henry's visiters, as to wherefore I deemed myself more righteous than my fellows, I boldly answered unto them that I claimed no such holiness, since I knew full well that my sins had been over-many and very foul in the sight of God; yet that I led the best life mine imperfect nature might reach unto, and trusted to amend it by his grace, and that specially had I not to answer for such crimes as the confession declared. For our miracles and the holy reliques, I said that I spake only what I was taught, and did really believe, and knew nothing of fraud therein; but that if my fellows were guilty, they had been so by their own counsel and at their own peril, the which I left unto their own souls and great Judge of all hearts. Finally, I declared, that for the habits and ceremonies which they reviled as superstitious and idolatrous, I had used them only as the meet and reverent rites ordained of the church; and that as holy Powle said of old, after the way which they called heresy, so worshipped I the God of my fathers.

"Hah! my masters," hereupon exclaimed Sir Richard Southwell unto his fellow-commissioners, for they were then seated in council around a table in our refectory,—"how think you, sirs, is not this a most contentious Canon and truculent priest, thus to oppose the king's majesty?—In my judgment, I trow he deserves little less than to be tied up in a sack and thrown into the Stifkey. What sayest thou unto this, fellow?"

"Briefly," responded I, "that I do neither resist the king's commands, nor might hope any thing from doing so, therefore let him take when he will my poor share of this world's goods in this monastery; for he who hath given himself up unto a holy life, is pledged unto poverty, and may call nothing his own save his habit and rosary. Yet would I say, let the king beware how he seizes upon the possessions of the holy church; lest, like the Eagle in Æsopus, who stole a brand from an altar and carried it unto her eyrie, he do but fire his own house with the sacrilegious spoil. —And for the consequences which you menace unto my free speech and alleged resistance, I fear nothing: they may indeed affright rich and dainty folk, who fare sumptuously and be clothed delicately, and have their chiefest hopes in this world, —but unto me, and such as me, the sack and the river have no terrors; since, I give thanks unto God, I know the way to heaven to be as short and as sure by water as by land."

Thus plain and fearless was my speech, although it placed me in sudden and no little hazard, for I was forthwith made close prisoner in my study, a dark narrow cell over the dormitory, until Henry's pleasure should be known concerning me; and there left with little to support life, and nothing of comfort. In the mean space, our common seal was broken, the prior and other brethren were put forth of the abbey, and its spoliation completed. All that might be gathered from it for sale, as the lead, the bells, and such like, were carried away, the church, the library, the canons' chambers, and every other place being stripped.

and then left to fall into that decay in which it now appeareth; though the prior's lodgings and offices were yet left standing, for the commodity of him unto whom the king should grant the possession. Then followed the destruction of the rich and noted shrine of our Lady, as that of Archbishop Becket at Canterbury was also destroyed and depoiled; when, albeit his remains had been venerated by all the pious for so many ages, his bones were burned on the very spot where hosts of pilgrims had so often knelt to do them honour. Then came forth a proclamation, declaring that the said archbishop was a traitor and not saint; that pictures and effigies of him should be destoyed; that feasts unto his honour should be for ever done away; and that even his very name should be blotted out of all books, upon pain of the king's displeasure and imprisonment. The costly plate and precious jewels of our once wealthy shrine, were now taken away and reserved for the king; and the furniture and all the other goods of the abbey were either sold, when their price was paid into the court of augmentation, then of late set up for that very purpose, or else were wantonly destroyed. In especial our reliques were burned, divers of our images broken to pieces and given unto the flames, and the great and famous effigy of our Lady carried unto London, and afterward consumed at Chelsea.

Nevertheless, of these ravages I beheld only the sad ruins and effects, being all the time held a close, though neglected, prisoner in my cell: where I almost deemed that it was the intent of the visiters to leave me to die of sickness or hun-

ger; for I had not now of a long space breathed the free air of heaven, and not seldom the day would pass, and none come to bring me food, so that I began to sink under that most rigorous confinement. I remember, moreover, how it was at this time told, that the like sickness and death had befallen several Carthusian monks of London, who were shut up in Newgate prison for resisting the king; whose fate was not thought to be cruelty in the visiters of their house, but the righteous judgment of God. And hereupon was I exceeding sad, yet possessed I nought which might console me save my books, which were yet left unto me in my narrow cell, and specially the learned Wiclif's New Testament in English, which had been given unto me by the dear departed Lady Bride Plantagenent.—I had already glanced over that most ancient tome, though rather from reverent attachment unto the memory of the beloved donor, than from any desire to acquaint me with the book itself; but at this time, in the sad and weary leisure of captivity, I set me to read it through with more diligence, to while away the desolate waste of my melancholy hours. And now was come the season of my spiritual deliverance; for, like Saul journeying unto Damask, the light from Heaven suddenly shone about me, and showed me how vain had been my former life, and much of my present faith. I beheld gradually, yet with great amaze, the wondrous superstition into which our church had sunken, by praying unto saints and angels instead of unto Christ the only mediator; and I now noted the wide difference betwixt the lives of the holy evange-

lists and apostles, and those led by many of the monks and brethren with whom I had been wont to company. Now could I fervently join in that most Christian desire and prayer of the beatified Lady Bride, that all England should have the rule of faith in the common speech, that men might be led to read and ponder the same for themselves; and now did I rejoice over the dawning fulfilment of her dying prophecy in the reformation of our corrupt clergy, and the spread of the translated word against all opposition, which showed it of a truth to be a divine thing, against which no weapon that was turned could prosper. For the English Testaments of late set forth in Flanders, by William Tindal and John Frith, had spread wondrously through the realm; and albeit Cuthbert Tonstall, the bishop of London, had seized upon all copies whereon he could lay his hands, and burned them with foul contumely at Powle's cross, yet was not the incorruptible seed of the word to be destroyed by fire, but the truth, as in the apostles' days, grew mightily: and other and larger translations of the whole Scriptures followed, until at length the realm was made glad by divers English Bibles, printed by the command of the king himself.

I had, until this time, taken little note of these things, because the hour was not come when mine eyes should be opened; for, since the Lady Bride's death, life seemed unto me a dreary waste, wherein there was nought but sorrow and unceasing disappointment. But now, as the truth dawned upon my mind, and I thankfully prayed over the increasing brightness, I felt a holy joy fill

my soul in the midst of all my sorrows, like unto that which made Powle and Silas worship and sing praises unto God in their prison at midnight.

And even upon this spiritual liberation, came my temporal freedom; for the king's visiters did at length sell the site of Walsingham Abbey, with its churchyard, orchards, and gardens, unto one Thomas Sydney for £90. This was done in November, 1539, whereupon they left our ruined house, albeit I was still immured within my cell; where, indeed, it is like that I should have died, had it not been for a wondrous and all unlooked-for Providence. I have already recounted that when Henry came unto Walsingham, the abbey was not perfectly edified, and, therefore, certain masons and builders were long employed thereon; the oversight of whom was assigned unto me, because of my former knowledge and practice of their art. The chief of these was one Master Bartholomew Stonehewer, of Norwich, a most skilful and ancient person, whom I had known at Westminster, what time I aided father Austin of Ely in building Henry Tudor's chapel there, wherefrom he did still keep me in lively remembrance and favour. It so chanced, that he was engaged by the new possessor of the destroyed abbey, to build him a fair manor-house on the site thereof, with the stones of the ruins; and, learning of mine imprisonment, he did at length contrive mine escape in the night, in the habit of one of his own workmen, with much hazard unto himself; spreading abroad the report, that in taking down one of the cells, they had found the remains of my lifeless body.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CLOSE AND MORAL OF AN OLD MAN'S STORY.

——Having now my journey done,
Just at the setting of the sun;
Here I have found a chamber fit,
God and good friends be thank'd for it!
HERRICK.

——No! I would not live again
The morning hours of life;
I would not be again
The slave of hope and fear;
I would not learn again
The wisdom by experience hardly taught.
To me the past presents
No object for regret;
To me the present gives
All cause for full content.
The future,—it is now the cheerful noon,
And on the sunny-smiling fields I gaze
With eyes alive to joy;
When the dark night descends,
I willingly shall close my weary lids,
Secure [redacted]e again.
SOUTHEY.

I WERE that full little is now remaining to be said of my poor history, for it skills not here to repeat the straits whereunto I was reduced, when I was thus drifted forth again upon the stormy sea of the wide world, or the loneliness of heart which

I felt therein. The few dear friends whom I had once known or might have claimed, were either long since dispersed or dead; and had all fallen around me, and left me desolate and destitute, like a rock when the tide hath left it dry and bare, or as the Autumn blast that shaketh the tree and scattereth the leaves therereof, whilst the trunk standeth naked and alone amidst all the tempests of the coming winter. Howbeit, even in my most forlorn estate, was my mind more hopeful and tranquil, than it had been whilst the Holy Scriptures and the pure simplicity of a Christian life were unknown to me; and especially did I draw this consolation from the early decease of my friends, that I had so many ties *less* unto earth, and so many *more* allurements unto heaven, those supporters being taken from me that I might put my trust in God only.

Yet had Master Stonehewer given unto me somewhat more than liberty, for knowing mine acquaintance with his own art, he commended me unto one of the same craft for entertainment; and I did once more practise it in lowly and cautious disguise, to baffle the purposes of those who would have sought my life. The payment of my daily toil, mean as it was, provided me with bread; the blessed hope of Christ was in mine heart, and more I sought not. Yet did I sometimes sorrow for the unquiet state of the realm of this realm, for the fickle and boisterous rule and the fierce persecutions of Henry, touching the Christian faith, and for the hapless lot of the many brethren expelled from the late dissolved monasteries who could neither dig nor beg; but for my-

self I mourned not, since I was but subjected unto the common lot of man,—to labour until I should return unto the ground.

And now, the tale of my life draweth unto a close; the which, they who may haply scan the same in after-years, shall find it to be, as I have afore declared, all inglorious and full of sorrow. That, indeed, it ended not in direful disaster, instead of my present most tranquil retreat from the world, I cannot attribute unto mine own caution or goodness, but chiefest must I laud the wise and merciful governance of God; which led the unsteady steps of my youth, if not into the ways of pleasantness, at least sometimes into the paths of peace, and did ever keep me from wandering into dangerous error. And, moreover, I may thank Him for having raised up unto me the friend and patron of mine old age, the noble Sir Thomas Moyle, for whom this little tome hath been written to record the passages of my former life; and, such as it is found, may he receive it with favour! Here, then, might I well finish mine history and my labours; for it availeth little that I should recount unto *him*, how he first took note of the aged Richard Plantagenet, or how large were his efforts or his bounty to give solace unto the closing days of my pilgrimage. But to the end that his noble charity may never be forgotten, and that others who shall read this my story may know the fate of my latter days, I will give a brief relation thereof; shunning, as I best may, the very shadow of flattery, although, natheless, it is not easily avoided, when the pensioner recounteth his

story unto the very patron who hath snatched him from want and sorrow.

It was then, I think, about the year 1543, that Sir Thomas Moyle bought the late Sir Christopher Hales' fair manor of Eastwell, in Kent; he being at that time Speaker of the Commons House of Parliament, Chancellor of the Court of Augmentation, in high favour with Henry VIII., and possessed of great wealth. He next determined to build him a stately mansion in the said manor, and thereupon he reared the noble palace of Eastwell, carrying down certain masons for the same, with whom were myself and he who entertained me. Albeit my fortunes were now indeed sunken full low, yet, even at this time, did I remember so much of my gentle birth and of the learning of my younger days, as to keep me apart from the baser sort of my fellow-workmen, and still to look upon some notable author at all my moments of leisure; though, as that which I read was full often in the Latin tongue, I was ever fain to hide it from my companions or any who approached, lest it should but provoke blame or derision. The book wherein I read whilst I wrought at Eastwell, was that most choice colloquy of Marcus Tullius Cicero upon old age, which I found to be somewhat of divine solace unto me now that I had reached the same condition of life: and which made me not only resigned and hopeful for the future, but even content with the past, stormy as in truth it had been. And methought his Cato did herein breathe out somewhat almost holy and Christian, in that place wherein he wondrously entreateth of his past days, which

beginneth "*Quod si quis Deus mihi largiatur*," which in our tongue, as I applied it unto myself, standeth thus.—Should it please God to give unto me a grant again to begin my life from my very cradle, and once more to run over the course of my years, yet would not I in any wise accept thereof. Nor would I, having now in a manner finished my race, run it over again from the starting-place unto the goal; for what pleasure hath my life had in it? Nay, rather, what pain had it not? though, were there none, there would questionless have been much weariness and trouble therein. Yet am I not now for bewailing my past life, as many, even wise men, have done; nor do I repent me that I have lived, because God hath led me to live so, that I am assured my days have not been given in vain: so that when I quit this life, I leave it but as an inn, and not as mine established dwelling; the bodies which nature hath given us, being but as a hostel wherein to lodge for a brief season, and not to abide in. Oh! how goodly and glorious, therefore, will that day be, when I shall leave for ever the rabble-rout and defilements of this world behind me, and go unto God and the fellowship of the world of spirits above!

It so chanced, then, that in the hot season of summer, when the workmen were resting from their labours at noontide, I retired me into one of the chambers of the mansion, and was pondering over the almost heavenly philosophy of this divine Roman, and mine own present condition; whereupon I fell into a deep musing, with mine hand pointing unto the words I have recounted, albeit I was all forgetful of that which was around me.

On a sudden, the sound of a voice near me recalled my wandering senses, whereupon I started up, but my book was gone, though presently I saw it in the hands of a grave and full-aged man, of tall stature and noble air, richly habited in black, who was reading the passage whereto I had pointed, with a benign and tranquil visage, yet with somewhat of amaze; as if he had been one who knew and felt it for himself, albeit he wondered how it should be understood or chosen by a common workman such as I did appear. When, therefore, he noted that mine attention was fixed upon him, he addressed me with gentle speech, saying that he meant not to disturb my reading or repose, albeit curiosity had led him to look on that which I seemed to have been studying, and that he much marvelled to find it Latin. This led me to relate unto him mine early instruction therein, and other discourse followed, whereby I found the good Sir Thomas Moyle, for it was no other than that noble knight himself, who now talked with me,—to be of so generous and charitable a soul, that I disclosed unto him somewhat more of my story; the which, whilst he greatly wondered at, he not only promised should be kept secret, but he did at once assure me of his protection and favour for the remainder of my days, wherein he said I should labour no more. That excellent person, indeed, would fain have received into his own household the aged form of the last of the Plantagenets, yet did he afterward consent to make me happy according to mine own desire, by giving me a little spot of ground near his mansion, whereon I might

rear me my last retreat from the tempests of the world.

This dwelling, therefore, was edified about 1546; and here, in this fair and solitary Eastwell, have I now lived nearly four years, in full security and free from care. Nor do I lack for either company or converse, for beside that the noble knight and his gentle consort do often come unto my cottage, to discourse with me upon the passages of former days, I do also sometimes receive their two fair daughters and their stately spouses; the Lady Catherine married unto Sir Thomas Finch, and the Lady Anne unto Sir Thomas Kempe. Nay, farther, when that there is holyday at Eastwell Palace by all the noble family being assembled there, the fair and promising offspring of those knights and dames do love to gather them around the aged Fitz-Richard, and court him to tell them the tales of his own youth: the brave boys asking him to speak of the fights of Bosworthfield, of Stoke, the battles of France and Burgundy, of the royal King Richard, the stout Sir Gilbert de Mountford, and the good and valourous Lord Lovel; whereupon I can well mark how the striplings' eyes fire, their hearts beat, and their feet plant them more firmly at the recital. The fair-haired girls, too, will often ask me of the Dutchess of Burgundy, the good Queen Elizabeth and her daughters, and specially of the Lady Bride, over whose memory they have blended their sweet tears with mine. And thus do I continually, as it were, live my life again, without the pain or labour which I felt when I first assayed it; and by thus often recurring unto the scenes thereof, they

are ever present with me, beside that I have some few passages of it written: and, moreover, the memory of an old man is ever best for the past, seeing that he regards but little either the present or the future. This, then, hath enabled me to pleasure my noble patron by recording my story, as he hath willed me, so exactly as it is here written; yet, natheless, have I done it with much toil, and many sad thoughts and remembrances, both for myself and the world wherein I have lived.

For, when I do look backward, my life doth sometimes appear nought but sorrow, doubt, and disappointment; and though such, I question not, will often be found in the course of many of full high estate, whom the ill-judging world deems to be the happiest of men,—yet have I sometimes known moments of sorrow, wherein I have almost sunken under very weariness of spirit, whilst pondering over mine hapless condition and pilgrimage. It was not mine to be borne up by those inspiring hopes which are full often to be found woven into the very fabric of the lives of others; but, with a heart well-attuned unto kind fellowship with all, I have been doomed unto solitude and danger, and sternly, as I have sometimes thought it, cut off from the friendship and love of mankind.

And from that mournful, memorable day which saw the sun of Plantagenet set in blood, when I beheld my royal father dying upon the battle-field, sorrow hath ever been familiar unto me, and joy little less than a stranger: for mine was a youth of doubt and peril, the hazards whereof ended not even when it had passed into manhood. For this

cause, I ever stood alone in the crowd of those with whom at divers times I consorted, and have never ceased to feel myself as a link severed from the great chain of living men; since but few have mourned with me in my sorrows, and joys have I had none to share with any: and albeit I have suffered much from the cruelty of man, never have I been soothed by the tender cares of woman. Yet, natheless, have I flattered me with the thought, that there was in truth one gentle creature, who sometimes beamed upon my darkened path, who would have been contented to have shared my lot, had God so willed it:—but it was not to be; the unreal vision charmed my senses but for a few brief hours, and then I awoke from the pleasant dream, only again to encounter substantial and lasting sorrow.

Yes! she hath fled!—the Lady Bride hath reached her eternal home, and thus escaped more years of suffering upon earth; though truly she also knew enough of this world's sorrow, ere her gentle spirit was released. It was hers to behold her widowed mother, the consort of the victorious Edward, taught by dire adversity how hollow, false, and worthless, were the gaudy things of time which she had once so fondly courted; and it was hers to feel that the throne and coronal, which made that queen so envied of all her sex, were no armour of proof to shield her from hazard and oppression. The Lady Bride beheld, too, how the good Elizabeth, although herself a queen and the mother of a queen, was left so destitute in her last moments, that not a relique of her greatness remained unto her, and she wanted

means to bestow even a parting gift upon her kindred, friends, and servitors; the grasp of Harry Tudor's avarice having despoiled her of all: nor was the daughter of that queen and sister of the Lady Bride, the good Elizabeth of York, in aught more prosperous.

But unto the dead, and specially unto such as are happily-parted, the sorrows of this world are as if they had not been, beside that they 'scape from many which fall upon their survivors; and I do ever and anon feel the heavy sum of mine own mischances lessened, when I look backward along the line of hapless and disquiet years since the Lady Bride's death, or upon the rugged and gloomy path which I have travelled, and rejoice to remember that her feet were so early and safely lifted above those thorns and briars. Yet can I now look upon these mischances with much calmness, for, albeit my youth was full restless and fiery under those disappointments, old age is a season of repose: and I trust the falling leaves of almost fourscore autumns have not counselled me in vain. Yes! the violent flood of my grief even for her is asswaged, and I can now bear to dwell upon her love, and yearly to visit her tomb with a tranquil sorrow, though it encloseth all that ever spake unto me of earthly happiness.

The fierceness of my hate against the oppressor of her house and mine is also past, though time was when I would have washed away the wrongs of both in the blood of the Tudors; but I have lived long enough to know the wisdom of intrusting the cause of suffering virtue unto the Great

Avenger, who sometimes leaveth the evil heart of man, by way of still greater pain, unto the self-destroying sway of its own foul passions. And I ween it hath been so with the line of Tudor; for did the crown sit securely upon Henry after the fight of Bosworth, and Richard's most dishonoured sepulture? And when the banner of insurrection was reared within the realm, were peace or justice the supporters of Henry's throne? Moreover, while his wasted and famishing country was full sadly learning that his coffers were too capacious ever to overflow, did not the king himself feel, that the hand may hold more than the heart can enjoy; and that the eye of his inquisition, after visiting with fearful glances the most secret matters of private men, might at last be suddenly turned inward to measure the depths of his own misery, and be overwhelmed with the bitterness of its own repenting tears?

He died, yet not in the fulness of his time, for royalty hath its canker-worm, as well as the rose. He died in agony and sorrow, and the mighty cost that was lavished upon his burial, did but meanly show for the affections of his people; which he, who coveted all, failed to obtain. In truth, he sleepeth now under the proud sepulchral pile which himself erected; which shall, perchance, redeem his name with posterity: but full stately though it be, it will yet stand unto after ages, but as the durable record of his unlawful covetousness and his people's oppressions.

But let not a Plantagenet, though fallen, become an uncharitable reporter of the actions of others. Richmond did indeed gain his throne by

the sword, but he upheld it by a peaceful policy; and those civil tumults which had long desolated the land, were healed in his reign, though after a fierce and bloody struggle. The proud barons, too, who often did alike make head against the monarch and oppress the people, were subdued, and were terrible no longer. In truth I will say of this king, that he had a full cunning wit to *gain* wealth and power, and a close grasp to *keep* it: and with this praise let the Lancastrian rest.

I have beheld, also, another King Henry, eighth of his name, the son of the sister of the Lady Bride, —whose merry and lusty youth was disgusted with his father's avarice, yet hath he too resorted to the same rapacity to gratify his desire for pomp and costly shows; which led him to be careless and prodigal alike of his own wealth and that of others. Inheriting his mother's right, his claim unto the throne of England was twofold stronger than his father's, and so was he never assailed, during the long period of his power, by any murmurs of disaffection from his people; albeit his inconstant cruelty might well have tempted them to renounce their allegiance. His fiery nature brooked not the slower, yet more certain, means of overthrowing an adversary by the cold-hearted devices of his sire,—but he ever went straight unto his aim by open violence; with which he was at all times prepared to silence aught of clamour or complaint. His oppressed and degraded subjects full often bowed them beneath the force of his power, while the nation had but one voice, which was the king's,—and but one law,—his caprice. The consciences of men, too, were disregarded;

and all were required at his bidding to take up or lay aside the doctrines of their faith, and their most solemn belief for time and eternity, with unquestioning submission, even as they would doff their wonted garments.

Nor, tutored by the memory of his gentle mother's sufferings, did he, while bending unto beauty, know how to regard the feelings, or to protect the weakness of woman. Alas! No! for every fair flower attracted him, but he delighted only to pluck and to destroy them. His queens, indeed, died not broken-hearted, or by slow degrees, like the Lady Elizabeth Widville, for he would rather blast them suddenly,—and, therefore, the couch of the king was too often but a step unto the scaffold.—The pages of his reign, if future chroniclers should be honest, and dare relate what our eyes have seen, will exhibit, perchance, the saddest picture of female suffering in the annals of men;—which, while it is a stain on the chivalry of the age that did bring forth such actions, will, in after-time, carry home unto every dwelling in this land, the certain truth that a retired life is the safest and sweetest sphere of a woman's virtues. Henry was a knight, and a courtly one, too, who loved tilts and tournaments to display his prowess, and gain the homage of heart and eye; but *whose* wrongs was he ever known to redress, and *what* emotions of sympathy ever bespake him true unto his vows?

He professed, and, possibly, did love, to study the deep things of Divinity, yet not for the wise and holy purpose of reforming the errors and corruptions of his people, and discovering the truth

for himself;—but because the doubts and subtleties of divers doctrines which the schoolmen teach, did form for him a fitting engine for perplexing or destroying the unwary. Thus ruled he, and was obeyed;—he exacted, and men yielded unto his oppressions; until he did at length desire to spread his supremacy and sway, and to reign alike over the church and state, and command his subjects even in those things, which embraced not only time but reached unto eternity: yet did this lordly ruler of men's minds and consciences live the very slave of his own passions, and died undetermined in his own faith! Under the rule of these sovereigns of the Tudor race, have two generations of men passed away from the earth; and, unto such as I am, a weary sojourner, what mighty changes hath not time wrought in that space, over the thoughts and manners of my fellows! And herein he, who, like me, hath had to struggle with the buffetings of fortune, may well be allowed to note them, and full often to indulge him in mournful thoughts upon the past, rather than in any goodly prospects for the future;—yet would I shun aught of a repining or embittered spirit. For albeit I have seen and known much of sorrow and inaction —yet must I ever confess that all my fellow-men have indeed not been thus sad and indolent, but advancing unto high and great perfection: and, amidst all the toils and difficulties, the wrestlings wherein many single beings have agonized, and sometimes even perished,—the eyes of Eternal Wisdom have seemed still to look down and govern them all; while I am assured that the hap-

piness and amendment of my race, is slowly, yet as securely advancing, as the sweet and early flowers which come before the spring, look out from amidst the ice and snows of the winter.—By much and close meditation I have learned, also, that the high hopes and noble end of man cannot be brought about without the aid of adversity; and that trials are sent unto him in mercy, not to sink him in ruin and despondency, but to bring into action the heaven-born powers of his nature; while the darkness of affliction is as meet to call forth the excellence of his immaterial spirit, as is the mantle of night unto the skies, to display the bright and beautiful stars of the firmament.

I will gather, then, from mine own remembrance of the revolutions which I have witnessed, and from the many occurrences of great import which be embraced within mine own little span of life,—food for much joyous hope and reflection. A new earth, as it were, hath in that time arisen from the bosom of the ocean; and they who are aweary of the changes of this land, may find another across the western main, where full pleasant shades shall gladden their fainting spirits, and where they may look upon nature in all the dewy freshness of her first birth.—Already, too, hath our own land felt the benefit thereof, in the interchange with those fair and fruitful countries; and her sons have launched upon the waves to combat with the elements, and bring back with every wind and tide the product of that untried world. I trow that it would much content and gladden me, to behold more of those mighty and

unknown lands given unto light by the brave Columbus of Genoa, the mariners of Portingale, or our own most daring shipmen. But why do I speak of a wilder discovery of *this* world, when my feet are fast wending unto the land of spirits; and ever, as I travel on, doth not each new turning of the way bring it more near and plain unto my view? Mine eyes are waxing dim, and my trembling hand is even now giving up its hold of the pen which hath inscribed this, and of the staff which sustaineth me.

Nevertheless, these latter days of my course have their own joys, being full of cheerful resignation and calm gladness for the *present* hour, and of humble hope, without fear, for the *last;* for, from the spot where living mine aged limbs are wont to repose them, I look forward with much tranquillity unto the village church, wherein they will shortly be laid at rest for ever. I do sometimes also look out unto the world with joyful hope, for methinks I behold, in the accession of the young Edward unto the throne of these realms, the establishment of a purer faith and a holier church therein, and the star of her prosperity rising through the parting clouds of her darkness. Over this do I rejoice greatly, and, albeit, I well ween that I shall never behold it, seeing that mine hour is near at hand,—yet is my spirit glad even at the distant prospect, and is already prepared to depart in peace.

THE END.





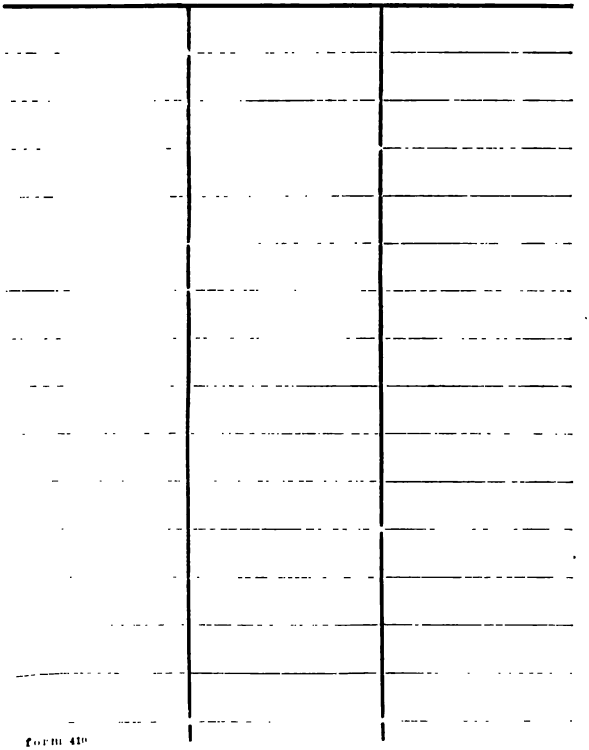






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